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ECCELINO DA ROMANO.

LONDON

BECKETT AND BAKER, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET-STREET.


ECCELINO ¹DA ROMANO,^{7.1819.}

SURNAMED

THE TYRANT OF PADUA.

A POEM,

IN TWELVE BOOKS.

BY 

HENRY AUGUSTUS VISCOUNT DILLON.


LONDON:

E. LLOYD AND SON, HARLEY STREET.

1828.

354.





P R E F A C E.

ECCELINO COUNT DA ROMANO was descended from a German family, who were settled for some generations in the March of Treviso. He was born in the Castle of Romano, April 26, 1195, and died of wounds received in battle, in the Castle of Soncino, in the Cremonese, September 27, 1259.

His character is well adapted to the song of the heroic Muse; inasmuch as he combined the warlike genius of Napoleon with the sanguinary policy of Maximilian Robespierre; the reckless bravery of our Richard III., crowned by the romantic ambition and wild superstition of Macbeth. The renown of his deeds in arms, however, surpassed the horror of his crimes; and his memory became an object of admira-

tion, even whilst the tradition of his dreadful cruelties struck mankind aghast.

The beauty, the address, the skill in magic, or the black art (then much practised in Padua), of his mother Adelaide, prepared the way for his ascendancy over the Ghibelin party, as well as the matrimonial alliances which he had contracted: for he was four times married, although he left no issue. One of his wives was a natural daughter of the Emperor Frederick II. of Germany, of the Swabian line: the patron and protector of the Ghibellines: the instigator of the deadly feuds, as well as the invader of Italy.

Adelaide was a noble lady of Tuscany, sister to the Count of Montem. Ridolfini tells us that she was an adept in the arcana of astrology, an interpreter of dreams and omens. She is said on her death-bed to have disclosed to her son the terrible secret of his birth: that he was the offspring of her adulterous intercourse with the demon. This wonderful avowal, proclaimed by himself, gave Eccelino vast power over the dark and wild passions of that age of tremendous energy.

This story is related by Salici: by Raimundo da Lirano: by Albertino Mussato, in his tragedy: by Henri de Valenciennes in his *Continuation of the Eccle-*

siastical Annals of Baronius; and by many others, who have added many legends appertaining thereunto. Ariosto says, in the *Furioso*,

Ezzelino immanissimo tiranno
Che fia creduto figlio del demonio.

Some historians assert, that on that death-bed she also revealed to him his future fortune; the fall of his power; the total wreck of his family, and the extinction of his race. Tradition makes her a sorceress, which proves that she was endowed with uncommon powers.

Eccelino's hostility was particularly directed against the Church, which he persecuted with unrelenting ferocity: wherever he reigned absolute, the holy rites of religion were suppressed, and its ministers exterminated. He strove, by unheard-of cruelties, to blot out the race of the nobles of the opposite side.

The Church, the republics, and such of the nobles, who were not of German origin, were in the interest of the Guelphic party.

Dominion and Freedom were the standards under which each faction marched to the field; and never in the history of the world was the question of liberty, or domination, brought more decidedly to issue, or con-

tested with more skill, valour, or perseverance, than in those bloody wars.

The Ghibellins, during the epoch that I have endeavoured to describe in these scenes, were supported by the person and armies of the German Emperor, and directed by the ferocious genius of Eccelino.

The Lombard League, the assertors of national independence and the guardians of public liberty, were patronised by the Holy See, that even preached a crusade against the tyrant. This league boasted of Azzo V., Marquis of Este, a great and powerful prince, of illustrious birth, as their ablest and most valorous champion, and their most successful captain.

The vicissitudes of this war illustrate the most memorable and extraordinary examples of human action. The play of the passions exceeded, in terrific energy, what we read of in Greek or Roman story.

Religion and Chivalry gave a principle of individual force to the actors of this awful drama, independent of the general motive of the seeking after liberty or domination.

The history has been followed, as far as relates to Eccelino, as closely as could be consistent with the conduct of a poem.

Having met with no detail of the life of Azzo of

Este, his particular story, as well as that of Hermione, the heroine, have been supplied by the imagination of the author.

The measure is the English heroic, the best suited to the classic epic, because of the energy and rapidity of which it is susceptible, and because it adapts itself to the subject as it proceeds. The metre was recommended by Thomas Campbell, the first English lyric poet of the age. I owe to a lady the suggestion of the story.

Notwithstanding a ten years residence in Italy, yet drawn away by other studies and pursuits, the Italian Muse is unknown to me. I can say the same with respect to the French and Spanish. I have not looked into the Classics since I left the University of Oxford. I consider these to be fortunate circumstances; for I should never have had the resolution to have entered into the lists, had I been intimately acquainted with the mighty efforts of poetic genius that have flourished, and illumined the world.

Let this poem be received, therefore, as the festive song of a Troubadour, rather than a finished, laborious task, achieved by the light of the scholastic lamp. Much of it has been rapidly composed, during journies made on foot and on horseback, amidst the scenery

that it describes, and where traditions yet remain to inflame the imagination. It was begun at Florence, February 1825; nine books were finished in Italy, September 1826; and the last lines were written in London, July 1827.

In fine, I have been stimulated to this undertaking by the great admiration I have ever felt in the contemplation of the manners, the habits, the virtues, the devotion, the chivalry, and the daring spirit of liberty displayed in the Middle Ages; and the disgust in hearing the point contested in enlightened times, disgraced as they are by every species of political corruption, venality, and servility over the world; whilst the *effrontery* of despotism is displayed in pretending to *meliorate* man's civil condition by usurping and crushing his political rights.

London, May 1, 1828.

CORRIGENDA.

Page	Line
84	1112, for "chattering hoofs," read <i>clattering</i> hoofs
109	578, read, <i>new horror brings</i>
113	676, read, <i>life inhale</i>
141	418, for "no," read <i>on</i>
232	639, for "his host," read <i>his horse</i>
304	455, for "Sillona," read <i>Sillana's</i>
313	691, read, <i>And Nature's quick'ning universal soul</i>
353	237, for "Trenta," read <i>Trento</i>
368	611, read, <i>And deck'd all o'er with rosemary and rue.</i>



ECCELINO DA ROMANO.

BOOK I.

OF wars and cruel deeds of that fierce chief
Who prey'd on Italy, and who pour'd forth
Libations of her blood to his fell rage,
That made the fuming earth, on which his foot
Had printed deep his sire's infernal seal,
Reeling and drunk, sing, oh aspiring Muse !
Oppression ! thou stern nurse of warlike feats,
Alas ! in Italy thou'rt not yet dead,
But hover'st still with dank and heavy wing
To blight and mildew this bright realm of light.
With joyous voice I hail those valiant knights
Whose banners then were bless'd by Holy Church ;

Which, then interpreting the Lord's commands,
 Would not his image were defac'd on earth,
 Nor that his form divine were bound in chains.
 Hail, Ec', great champion of the league ! thou, like
 The shepherd's boy of Bethlem, who arose
 To smite Goliath, foe to God, he then
 The crown of Israel receiv'd, the high
 Recompence for the rebel giant slain, 20
 To God's own people timely succour brought ;
 Accept the crown of laurel I now strive
 To weave, to deck the memory of thy fame :
 For with no venal voice I sing in days
 When tyranny accurst is lauded loud,
 And incense fragrant burns for rule usurp'd,
 Which then by thy stout arm was overthrown.
 Oh, Italy, propitious smile on me !
 Thy gracious smiles will be my highest meed ;
 Thee to propitiate e'er shall be my care. 30

War, dreadful War ! but sweet and soothing when
 Thou urgest the oppress'd and trodden down
 Furious to drive their rattling chariot wheels
 O'er conquerors, whirling their trembling limbs,
 Spurning with deadly hate and bitter scorn
 The toil of empire and dominion proud ;
 Zealous to thee I dedicate my song !

The sun had set upon the lofty walls
Of Rocca de Montecilici ; though far
Then Eccelino his new conquests had 40
Survey'd, he yet insatiate was of blood.
Before him spread the wide luxuriant plain
On th' Adriatic shore, teeming with flow
Of life. Here Nature's fruitful womb pour'd forth
Her most delightful forms ; for here more fair
Nor nymph, nor dame, in all Cisalpine Gaul,
Could crown with grace her ever beauteous works.
In stature full and graceful port surpass'd
The rural nymphs of all rich Lombardy.
Earth yielded here kindly her goodliest fruits. 50
The milk white oxen heav'd along the wains,
Groaning with weight of Bacchus' joyous toil !
Ceres and Pomona shed around their
Smiles that met on ev'ry side his dark frown,
Who from his lofty stand view'd that sad land,
From which his iron grasp squeez'd tears and gore,
Fast holding, had invested with despair.
Behind arose the towers of Padua,
'Trickling with blood, like Niobe in tears ; 60
From these he turn'd his fiery glance away,
Gorg'd and content ; then pacing to and fro,
His bosom swelling with the lust of rule

Supreme, in thought thus to himself began :
 " Ambition, master of my soul, all hail !
 Thee do I worship, only thee, and then
 Revenge delicious comes with its sweet draughts
 To steep my feverish and my jealous soul ;
 Intoxicating draught, that sets it on
 Its great design ! deep down to darkest Hell, 70
 I'll trample those my reign who dare to scorn,
 And thrive in their despite. I'm not the fool
 Who owes his station to the love of men !
 My rule's the sword, and terror is my law !"
 'Terror, the short-lived plan of tyrant's rule,
 With him succeeded long, for smoking streams
 Of blood on field and scaffold shed, imbued
 The earth ; like trees he lopp'd the human form,
 Mowing the limbs from the unsightly trunk ;
 With deep disgrace the human face assail'd, 80
 And blur'd its beauty with the stamp of shame
 Indelible, God's image thus he marr'd
 To make the throat of his stupendous hate ;
 (Hate from self-love intense that did arise.)
 In Ammon's son 'twas glory, a whirlwind
 That swept th' embattled and ensanguin'd plain,
 And quench'd compassion in the glowing heart ;
 In Eccelino love of rule, without

Remorse, contempt for his adopted soil,
And fear of vengeance for his own misdeeds. 90

But his stern thoughts soon interrupted were
By other calls more urgent, that appall'd
That heart that fear could ne'er appal before.
His mother on her death-bed now lies stretch'd,
Prophetic warns him, with no soothing voice ;
And if remorse she wakes not, yet she wakes
Fear, the worst anguish of our being, that e'er
Imprisons and benumbs the tortur'd soul,
Humbling in dust the front erect of man.

With awful reverence her duteous son 100

Approaches straight the gloomy matron's couch,
Whose eyes th' advance of death had not yet dimm'd.

With fearful gaze her son beheld those eyes,
That saw, by magic fell and sinful aid,
Far into fate ; and ever and anon

Recoil'd their glance deep in her own dark breast,

That strange alliances had form'd, beyond

The pale of nature ; and by adult'ry

Infernal, this her fav'rite son had yean'd,

Who now aghast before his mother stood, 110

From her prophetic voice to know his doom.

Severe though anxious was her dying look,

As best became one who full well might know

That fate that doth transcend the grave, for her
Was hopeless ; for in magic she had dealt,
And scorning still a death-bed penitence,
Proudly rejected recompense of Heaven,
Eternal bliss, ills present that repays ;
For Adelaide had long the doctrines learn'd
Of Manichæans, and, or good, or ill, 120
Believing absolute the ill she chose
To prop her house, and feed ambition high,
For present good derided future ill.
Half rais'd from her couch she wav'd her hand
Attention to impose : her brow sublime
Declar'd her vast and penetrating thought ;
Her tongue in accents broken, shrill, and sharp,
Like the north wind that cuts benumbing all,
The Sybil's oracles did thus disclose :
" List, oh, my son, to this thy awful fate, 130
Fate that will pass thy grave, and blast thy name :
Success will cease to crown thy daring arms ;
Our house, our rule, will all extinguished be ;
Thy memory, a blazing beacon still
Will burn, of horror ever to be spurn'd,
A foil to heroes, and supreme in blood !
When on my nuptial night entranc'd I lay
Warm clasped in thy pretended father's arms,

He started from a wild and dreadful dream ;
He thought his castle of Romano toss'd 140
Aloft in air, high borne upon the clouds
Hov'ring a while, then sank into the depth
Of earth unfathomable, ingulph'd, and lost !
And now the fearful secret hear of thine
Own monstrous birth : half fiend thou art, and born
Rebel to Heaven. Behold ! thy motley blood
Flows partly from the great apostate's veins,
He who defied the eternal King Supreme,
And still on earth rebellion doth excite !
Thou his own son, his chosen captain art, 150
His blood imbues thee with his reckless rage,
And all his dev'lish stratagems and wiles,
To compass thy designs, and rule in spite
Of mankind's deep and universal hate ;
For thine own creatures loathe and fear thy sight.
Ambitious was I born, and scorn'd the sphere
That nature fixes for our being to fill.
By necromancy, and the magic art,
I strove to gain ascendancy o'er men.
Voluptuous beauty did my power enhance, 160
I scorn'd to tarry for Heaven's late reward,
My virgin vows were to the demon made :
His aid (and not in vain) implor'd, the view

Enchanting, brighten'd to my dazzled sight,
Fate I unravell'd by sorcery and dreams,
Omens and mysteries, all dark and dread,
The tools of minds superior, of great souls,
Who boldly climb ambition's highest steep,
Spurning mean fear, that dares not pay the price
Of brilliant glory, and advancement high ! 170
My impulse carried me to other worlds ;
My will undaunted sought alliance close
With him, th' Infernal, kindred with myself
In thoughts and feelings ; thus, in hope to hold
A course superior, safe, 'mid all those ills
Of fate, that meaner mortals' steps beset !"
She paus'd for breath : ghastly and awful now
Appear'd ; her spirit heav'd and groan'd amain,
Restless to take its airy flight from realms
Of day to those dark shades below, and there 180
Regain its strength, once more to range by night
A ghost, and haunt those spots, the seat of all
Its former cares, and anxious daring toil.
For souls like her's, far from the realms of bliss
In troubles dwell, fit agents they for Hell ;
Thus while she spoke, each fury rack'd his breast,
And all by turns his heaving entrails gnaw'd.
Fear but a moment had usurp'd the rule

Of that proud heart, which was ambition's seat ;
For Eccelino never crouch'd to fear, 190
An instant it might quiver all his frame
With a moist tremor, then his limbs bedew ;
But, like a shadow pass'd, his swelling breast
Would burst, or grapple then with every foe.
In pride and exultation he replied,
“ Hence with thy bodings ! I defy the ills,
Whate'er they be, of destiny ; nor aught
Fear I, so much as gloriously rejoice,
For this my regal lineage now first known.”
Then with a look profound, that seem'd to search 200
The bowels of the earth, with solemn voice
He to his father thus his prayer address'd :
“ O thou that givest impulse to my soul,
Thou that rewardest ever daring hearts
With present gain, may now thy matchless wiles
Encompass me about, to guide my way
Through blood and dangers to a well earn'd crown.
With sparkling diadem encircle now
This brow superb, that only then to thee
Would fealty true, and homage ever pay. 210
Through thee alone I deign to mount a throne,
And scoff at terrors that transcend the grave !”
Then Adelaide, exhausted, calm replied,

“ Farewell, my son ! run on thy great career,
Vengeance deal out upon our many foes ;
Call to thine aid to strengthen thy tough arm
Th’ infernal spirit, who assum’d the form
Of man, when, lending a too willing ear,
He to my vows in lover’s guise appear’d,
With gentle ardour then did fan love’s flame. 220
Ah me ! wherefore fell I, most womanlike,
In that incautious moment, steep’d in deep
Delight that fir’d to frenzy all my being ;
And for that dreadful concubinage high,
Losing for me, and thee, all hope to come ?
Fortune with golden wings hath me up-borne,
And fann’d those gilded wings with rosy breath
Of morn continual. My daughters fair
Have all espoused been to mightiest lords ;
My sons all revel in their rich domains ; 230
And then thy youthful valiant deeds brilliant
Were blazon’d forth, like to the orient sun,
Who chases far and quick the gloom of night ;
So thy renown once shone through the dark clouds
Of vapours foul, that dimm’d thy early day.
Success will blazon crime till it become
Virtue ; so has the victor ever chain’d
His gory victims to his chariot wheels,

And yet th' incense of their applause receiv'd.
Oh, dreadful thought ! appalling horror strikes 240
When fate we know, yet cannot 'scape our doom.
By astrologians bred, their track pursued,
I could divine what the dark womb of time
Contain'd ; of all my race the horoscope
I cast, and in the future see a blank !
This done, long years have not yet seen me smile,
Nor, till this fatal night, has the dread sound
Of my portentous voice assail'd the ear
Of those it now to sure destruction dooms."
Faint, and more faint, she utter'd these last words ; 250
Her quicken'd spirit saw the near approach
Of its escape, and shot a sudden flash
From her majestic eye, whose steady glare
Shew'd absence of all fear ; she stretch'd, and heav'd ;
Then her stern ghost departed, free to prowl
Through regions whence its wicked impulse came.
She ceas'd to breathe, and her afflicted son
Back started, —frenzy seized his rolling eye ;
He stamp'd, and spurn'd the earth with high disdain,
Scorning the thought, that thus his mother could 260
Give proof of mortal frailty, die, and leave
Him midst his foes alone. Fain would he then
Have follow'd, duteous to attend upon

His mother's steps; his dagger then he drew
Against his breast; three times the hilt he smote,
Then held the clutched dagger high in air,
Exclaiming, "Those who would outlive the shock
Of my proud steed, and conquer'd lay around,
And who would rise again whene'er my face
Is turn'd, of them create an hecatomb, 270
To sooth my mother's great and awful shade."
But now with feelings calm'd, approaching near
The couch, bending with reverential awe,
He said, "Oh thou that cold and lifeless liest!
Oh whither has thy spirit fled? For sooth
A spirit such as thine, a glorious soul,
Could not be quenched with thy living form,
Nor be absorb'd as thy life's blood congeal'd.
Shall great intent, and high emprise, deep search
And thought divine, and mighty impulse, that 280
O'erflows great hearts (whether to good or ill),
Shall these prove mortal and extinguish'd be,
Or wrapt in sleep eternal? Thought forlorn!
Then hope eternal mocks our idle being,
Our life, in truth, a very jest would prove!
Oh, soul of man, that speakest through remorse,
And in thy conscience testify'st to thine
Immortal self, that on the rapid wing

Of thought, transcends all bounds of space and time,
Shalt thou be quench'd? dim as the lustrous fire 290
Of those once fear-inspiring eyes, that shot
Their rays through every breast, and lighted up
The preternat'ral vision of her soul?
Cold, lifeless corse! from thee I turn away.
In thought, in wish, in precept, now I fly
With thy departed soul. My polar star
Which ever present, still shall be to me
Alive; for in my breast thy soul exists,
And still exerts its undiminish'd force."

Three times the sun his fiery orb had quench'd 300
In darkness, and again dim night had spread
Her vast and sable pall o'er all the heavens,
Unspangled by its brilliant gems; and morn,
Sickly and faint, appear'd e'en now to weep.
This happy omen Eccelino seiz'd,
Once pious, to devote the night to her
Great obsequies. Rumour had spread both far
And wide; all were in wild amazement lost
That she, who half in other worlds had dwelt,
Still should be doom'd to die; for Padua, 310
Great in the magic art, had blazon'd forth
Her fame, high moving in ambition's sphere.
Most kind she was to those of low degree,

A gracious mistress ever prov'd, unlike
 Her son, jealous, irascible, and vain ;
 She dees for mischief warr'd, or cruel spite.
 And now when pious hearts prepar'd to breathe
 " Ave Maria ! " grateful prayer of close
 Of day, countless the multitude that then
 Assembled round the lofty frowning brow 320
 Of that faw'd mount, steep and erect, that stands
 A giant sentinell, and keeps afar
 His vigil o'er that vast and fertile plain
 Extending wide from Padua to Po ;
 Now mov'd the awful pageant forth, winding
 Like th' antique triumphs round the fretted frieze
 Of temples dedicate to Delphos' God ;
 Or like the mimic hosts of martial Rome,
 In proud array, that seem to move around
 Great Trajan's column ; gloriously it wound 330
 From summit to the base in solemn file,
 Murd'ring to minstrelsy lugubrious. First
 In order came the bands of Holy Church,
 With all the train of priests and monks recluse,
 Chanting aloud the service of the dead ;
 A requiem for her soul, that needed prayer
 And intercession strong, t' obtain the grace
 Divine, which without limit is, on all

May fall chasing away deepest despair,
Deep though it be as ocean's raging waves, 340
Engulphing without hope. The deep ton'd choir
Pour'd their melodious hymns with hearts sincere,
Earnest and contrite, to assuage the wrath
Of Heaven, that now, in chastisement of sin,
Wreak'd his worst vengeance by a tyrant's arm.
Next came the damsels clad in virgin white,
Emblem of their own spotless state, and from
Their heads depended decent the long veil;
Enrob'd like Grecian daughters, graceful on
They mov'd as to a sacrifice of yore; 350
Each in her hand a basket held, from which
At every step she scatter'd flowers around :
Herbs aromatic, rosemary and rue.
Mournful they cast their eyes upon the ground,
At every step their hearts responsive beat.
The age of love is oft the age of woe,
For hearts attun'd to love are most attun'd
To grief ; Religion's saintly rites will oft
The woman's heart to love and woe invite ;
For at her sacred shrine love we invoke, 360
Eternal bliss, that glowing seraphs share.

Religion, hail ! that fruit delicious dost
Yield unto all in ev'ry clime ; among

Mankind thy joys diffuséd are, with tongue
That speaks the same to universal man !
And in each age, thy consolation bland
Hath thine own grace and birth divine declar'd.
And hail, thou universal man ! that art
Link'd in one chain of pure intelligence.
Hail ! wheresoe'er thou art, in every clime ; 370
To thee I hold, nor vainly pride myself,
To be here number'd in a partial race,
Nor to one spot as man to be tied down.
The earth our portion is, and instinct is
Our law ! our hearts the monitors of ill.
And hail, thou holy faith, that link'st mankind
In one vast chain of gentle brotherhood,
And draw'st the line 'twixt man and brute ! Thou speak'st
Wisdom through a voice divine, following
Pure nature, pruning her excrescence wild. 380

Solemn and slow the bier approached now,
Like Eastern palanquin ; the Afric bird
Had her rich plumage lent : it wav'd on high,
Like willows weeping o'er some hallow'd spot,
The load proclaiming, now so solemn borne,
The emblem of our frail mortality,
That makes our quailing lives hang tremblingly
'Twixt hope and doubt. In nobler minds will hope

Be of our obscure being the essence bright ;
For still we live in future and in past ; 390
The present never can we grasp ; we live
In hope that swells our being coequal with
All time. So ponder'd then that chieftain proud,
Who hardly now could bear the galling thought
That e'en himself was but a denizen
Of earth, and must at last return in dust
'To elements primeval ; yet still more
Fear'd he that if his spirit surviv'd, never
Peace should he find : he, who in mock'ry held
Those orisons and prayers to God above, 400
Whom tyrants all rebelliously defy.
With wonder all beheld the man who now,
Duteous to rites divine, could thus appear
Mantled in sable garb, though his bright mail
Shining amid the folds, like twinkling stars
Through the black clouds, betray'd at once the man
That from himself ne'er could abstracted be.
Heavy he hung upon his airy steed,
That with elastic step pac'd buoyantly
Over the ground, whose breathing nostrils now 410
Seem'd from afar to snuff his native gales
Of Happy Araby ; a Moor each side
Rein'd in his stag-like head ; with folded arms

Upon his breast, his rider mus'd, in thought,
On things that might have check'd his daring flight.
Behind him came six hundred valiant knights ;
Each 'stead of warlike brand, a flaming torch
High held ; as when the moon upon the sea
Sheds her chaste light, so did their armour clear
Reflect the pallid gleam around ; ghastly 420
Th' unvisor'd warriors look'd, grim as a troop
Of ghosts that wander on the banks of Styx.

These were the knights, true to his high commands,
To pierce through squadrons on the trembling field,
O'erthrow an host in battle, or pour forth
Vengeance on a devoted land ; these were
The knights who, at his signal, proudly drew
Their flaming falchions in the cavalcade
Of that imperial chief, who in dispute
Did to his vassal then maintain his sword 430
Was best (for Eccelino once did pay
Homage and fealty to a sovereign lord).
His own true blade he drew, flourish'd aloft :
The lightning fir'd the bosoms of his knights ;
Six hundred swords all glitter'd in the air.
Sullen the Emperor said, " Thy sword, I own,
O, Eccelino, better is than mine !"

Opening wide its pond'rous gates, the church,
Portal of tombs, the pageant now receives.

Portal of the grave : for Religion is 440

The lofty arch that's thrown from earth to worlds

We cannot reach, but o'er that arch that doth

Th' infinite combine with our darker state

Below, that hath thrown man drifting betwixt

Two awful tides, half angel, half a brute ;

Swimming on hope, he strives and gasps for breath

Eternal. Eccelino enters now

The fane, struck with these thoughts, that ever will

Flit through the heart of e'en a reckless man.

A thousand voices swell th' harmonious choir, 450

Ten thousand tapers brilliant burn around ;

The solemn dirge—the march of death—deep in

The dismal grave the heart benumb'd doth sink.

Quick from their steeds the mailed warriors spring

In double rows ; their torches' fitful blaze

Glares on their warlike mien ; the tomb receives

Its sacrifice, remorseless and most sure

Pledge of mortality, that none e'er spares !

The tomb is clos'd : sudden the thunder growls

Aloud, shaking the riven dome, now struck 460

By forked bolts of Heaven's high wrath defy'd ;

The rain in torrents pours, then suddenly

Is parch'd by blasts of a resistless wind ;

The shiver'd roof now inward falls ; horrid

It tortuous hurls its flaring beams, and in
Combustion pours its molten lead, mingling
With rain, o'erwhelming, scattering hideous
Ruin around, torture, and wounds, and death.
Sudden the devastation, as from shocks
Of earth in far Peru, where cities sink, 470
Heaven's harbinger of wrath to guilty man.
So doth a tyrant stumbling go to his
Predestin'd fate, for God doth sometimes speak
In thunder, often through the people's voice !
Rout and confusion wild quick clear the church,
Tenebrious its rich broken columns stand.
Darkness and silence reign ; again aghast
Stands Eccelino solitary there,
Nor quitted he the spot where his firm step
Once fix'd ; alone, intrepid, unsubdued. 480
Still to his purpose ever was he true !
Behold in utter darkness, from the tomb
Portentous rises now a pale blue flame,
Nor light, nor heat emits around, itself
Alone is visible. All yet is still
In deep night mantled, when the son aghast
In speechless horror sees his mother's form
Rise mid the flame ; slowly it glides along,
Waving its arm, then vanishes in air :

And nought remains, save the blue flame, his steps 490
That beckons on. The vision he obeys
That points to Padua; the beacon light
Still gleams before his courser's head; behind
Close follow'd him those knights, whose sealed eyes
Beheld the vision not; yet true to him,
Where'er he march'd, they follow'd in his train.
What anarchy doth reign when spirits come
From Heaven or Hell to prowl about on earth,
To guide or warn us, or perchance to give
Knowledge of things that are too dark and deep 500
For human ken. Still our unbounded souls
Love to hold converse with what lies beyond
Our reach, and strive to trace the hand of fate.
This awful truth strikes deep the human breast,
Agents of fate, that dwell beyond the pale
Of nature, sometimes will appear to us
In form, sometimes invisibly act on us,
Whispering in dreams, or giving warnings by
Omen. This world stands not alone, nor can
Our eye-sight reach the sphere on which our being 510
Doth move; we darkly see, but deeply feel
Our fate; calm should we then its doom abide,
For every mortal's doom is ever fix'd.
No armour can resist the dart of death,

Nor joy, nor fortune gay can ward off woe :
Fate will hurl crowns and sceptres to the earth,
And rouse a people madd'ning like the waves
Of the fierce troublous sea, when tempests roar.
One hour that night a dreadful earthquake shook
E'en the far Brescia ; dwellings were hurl'd down ; 520
The peaceful burghers pass'd from sleep to death,
Or rather wak'd to add their shrieks unto
The crush of reeling walls and riven roofs ;
So that the Rhetian Alps rebellow'd to
The yell. Such were the orgies that in Hell
That night were held ; a comet horrid glar'd
With blazing mane, sweeping through air, that fix'd
The affrighted gaze of a whole prostrate race,
Prepar'd to bend their necks submissively
Unto the axe. Unscar'd by portents dread, 530
Onward undaunted Eccelino rode ;
Led by the flame invisible to all
But him, to Padua came he ; and, as when
A bleak and nipping frost encrusts the plain,
Stumbling and sliding with uncertain steps
We creep along, so by his presence then
Chill'd was the tide of life ; silent he rode
'Mid desert streets, casements and doors fast barr'd ;
Breathless suspicion star'd abroad, and care

Cank'ring the jaded heart, and pallid fear, 540
Distraction wild, and fell despair, their reign
Resum'd. Far hence now courage fled ; vengeance,
Whose dagger thirsts for tyrant's blood, benumb'd
And lifeless lay. The tyrant now in haste
His council calls, and deep deliberates
On high designs to fix his iron rule.

Say, Muse, of all the horrors that do most
Afflict mankind, what place is meetest ? Where
The Pandemonium of all guile, if not
In tyrant's councils ? Need we then for worse 550
Go search the depths of Hell ? No ; for in Hell
A race exists in nought akin to us,
Whilst tyrants are of our own flesh and blood ;
Their teethless gums our mother's nipple oft
Have press'd, and drawn the self-same tide of milk ;
They will with treach'rous smiles our presence greet,
And still with smiles hear our o'erstrain'd joints
Crack on the bed of torture ; sighs they hear
Wrung from the heaving bosom 'reft of all
The elements that nature gives to glad 560
Our hearts, air, earth, and fire, and water pure.
Pause then, my Muse, lest my distracted brain
Tost in this maze of horror, blind with rage,
Should on my argument confusion throw !

Now thick as leaves that strew th' autumnal brooks
Spies, vermin vile, whose prey is man, abound ;
Each with his ready tale, by malice bred,
Or for the price of blood ; false swearers teem ;
Murder assumes the legal robes, and thron'd
In state, a solemn mockery displays. 570
Rapine and fraud, usurping the high name
Of justice, lurk beneath her sacred garb.
The veil of night that covers crimes of less
Offenders covers too the giant sins
Of rulers ; at that mystic hour, like beasts,
They leave their lair to prowl abroad for prey.
Hark to that shriek that pierces through the night !
Bonelli, now the good, the upright judge,
Is seized, torn from a wife's fond arms away,
From her whose tenderness sole guerdon was 580
For all his labours ; from his children torn.
As the majestic oak uprooted falls,
The tender saplings crushing in his fall,
The tender branches that around him grew,
'Reft of the parent tree will droop and die.
Upright in conscious virtue firm he walks,
Like an old Roman, to his prison walls :
To that fam'd dungeon 'erst by Zilio built ;
He of Milan, who boasted loud that ne'er

Prisons like his were built before, for they 590
Excluded light and air beyond what yet
Malice had e'er contriv'd ; dreadful they were
To the infirm of purpose, but to those,
Th' heroic souls who thirst for lasting fame,
Who look on life as part, and not the whole
Of their great being, and death the passage sweet
To boundless liberty, to those they were
But beds of roses ; e'en so thought he then,
That upright man, who in great justice' cause
A willing martyr to the stake was led. 600
The inborn virtue of his swelling heart
Glow'd with a flame so holy, so divine,
So fervent, as t' exclude all outward pain.
What though your racks the bloody drops may wring
From agonizing nature, tyrants ! no !
Ye ne'er can harm the firm and upright soul !
The signal given, destruction's work begins
On every side ; fathers and mothers, all,
Friends, lovers, brothers, are to durance dragg'd.
There was a voice of weeping in thy streets, 610
Padua ! a voice of weeping and despair
For those that were not ; matrons clasp their hands
And wildly run abroad, and tear their hair
That floats dishevell'd o'er their frantic forms ;

Wan widow'd mothers moan o'er orphan babes,
And aged fathers feel or seem to feel
In their own frames each agonizing throe,
Each throb of pain their sons are doom'd to feel !
'The holy monks recluse put up their pray'rs
For aid to Heaven, whence aid can only come, 620
To avert the fury of th' apostate's son.
The priests more active, consolation give
Of pious offices ; indignant they
Behold their labours marr'd, the brave, the wise,
The best, first to destruction doom'd ; the brave,
The wise, the best, the tyrant's victims are.
Uprose the man of God from his sick couch,
St. Anthony, whose tongue mellifluous
Pour'd the rich dew of heavenly manna on
His flock forlorn. Arm'd with the thunderbolts 630
Of Holy Church, fear he had none ; martyr
And patriot true was he, not death he shunn'd,
So he but serv'd the people and his God ;
For thine especial care the people are,
O, Holy Mother Church, thy children they !
Thy cause and their's and God's, in union strong
Go hand in hand, indissolubly link'd,
And worse than worst apostacy her crime,
When she a sycophant to rulers turns,

God and the people's cause abandoning ; 640
For Church and State should ever sever'd be,
Else the Creator we a vassal make
To kings, or their ally, to rivet fast
The galling chains of civil slavery !
Bound on his high behest the saint appear'd ;
Though bent with sickness and the weight of years,
Nerv'd was his soul to that great enterprize,
For justice and humanity to plead.
Too seldom can the admonitory voice
Of holy men e'er touch the seared hearts 650
Of rulers: they, intrench'd in fancied power,
Are stung to madness with the just rebuke !
As when on Lybian sands, the king of beasts
Th' unwary traveller descries afar,
His sides he lashes, shakes his brindled mane
With rage ; not with less rage the tyrant view'd
Th' intruder bold ; but when that brow serene,
The apostolic fervor of that eye,
That seem'd to turn to other worlds from this,
Had met the tyrant's gaze, back started he 660
Surpris'd, half unresolv'd, then lent an ear
To the great preacher's honie'd words, that like
Harmonious music lull'd the storm, and chang'd
His wrath to penitence ; humbly he vow'd

To check the fury of his base revenge,
And contrite from the city to retire.
Vain mockery of contrition ! his retreat
Was but the signal to unleash the hounds
Of Hell. In those devoted walls no hope,
No respite, no repose was found ; for there 670
His reckless minions, drunk with blood, are still
The ministers in those dread orgies, till
Th' archpriest of blood return ; that day her sons
Padua pour'd forth to hear the doom of him,
Her first, best citizen. High on a throne
Of state in his vast hall the tyrant sat,
His barons, and his chivalry around,
(To guard his life on which hang all their hopes !)
Reflected glory on their brilliant chief.
His fame attracted followers, his deeds 680
Of arms had ever filled his ranks with names
Of high renown ; his stature low and small
Reach'd not the common height, but awful was
As to gigantic mould when all with fear
Beheld that haughty step and warlike mien,
And heard that voice, that like the trump of war
Commands, and saw, o'erpowering ever, flash
His conquering eye, that in the battle, calm
Through clouds of dust, and reeling squadrons shook,

Could clear discern, and then direct that voice 690
To rally broken hosts, and stem the tide
Of fight. Such was the reckless man who now
Ascends the judgment seat ; around he casts
A baleful look that deep dismay inspires
In all, Rainero's patriot heart except.
He, the just idol of a people's love,
Is led to sacrifice ; though pale his cheek,
Firm is his step : the soul invincible
Has lent his limbs a vigour not their own,
Though on the rack they late had tortur'd been. 700
A moment on the tyrant high enthron'd
A glance he cast, and straight a change came o'er
His features ; 'twas not fear, but rage
And indignation swelling in his breast,
The judgment-seat profaned thus to see,
The people's necks a lowly footstool made,
And murder thus in ermine robes array'd.
Close on his steps fair Leonora came,
Girt with a group of sons and daughters, such
As not old Rome, nor the fam'd race of those 710
Who erst beleaguer'd antique Troy, could e'er
Surpass ; nor had the matron lost those charms
That do remain, after fresh youth is past,
To riper years ; deep grief had prey'd upon

Her cheek and dimm'd the lustre of her eye ;
But there was still tranquillity, that show'd
A soul that not unequal was to bear
The ills of fate : such was the wife of him,
Whom Eccelino now did thus address.

“ Foul traitor, hear thy doom ! thy crime is known, 720
And Padua owes her safety to my care.
I know thy league with Almeric, I know
That others false as thou, in secret lurk.
'Tis ever thus that foul conspiracy
Palls her in thickest night, nor ever dares
In noontide blaze her blood-stain'd front to show !
But thou, detected traitor ! for thy crime
Thy worthless life is forfeit to the law.”

He spoke, and straight arose around a deep
And hollow murmur, like autumnal gusts ; 730
There was a movement to and fro that shook
That throng like reeds ; the chieftains grasp'd their swords,
And Eccelino, more in scorn than fear,
Muffled his cloak in folds around his breast.
Hell seem'd to lour upon his dark'ning brow.
As deem'd he that he saw in those dark signs,
The sure forerunners of rebellion's storm.
Swift as the lightning darts on the frail beech,
That spreads its light and graceful branches wide,

And leaves it stripp'd and bare, so did the words 740
Of Eccelino sudden blight the hopes
That haply yet might linger round the heart
Of Leonora: on her knees she sinks
In all the recklessness of deep despair,
Clasping in agony her frantic hands;
With tearless eyes upturn'd for aid she prays
To Heaven, th' avenger of the widow's wrongs!
Not so Rainero: truth and justice swell'd
His fearless heart; his love of wife, of friends,
Of children, now was lost in love of all 750
Mankind, whose glorious champion he stood forth;
Though well he knew how Almeric had died
Upon the rack, yet nowise daunted, he
This bold retort hurl'd in the tyrant's teeth:
"Traitor's a name I own not; for to thee
Nor fealty, nor allegiance do I owe,
Usurper as thou art, who hast achiev'd
A conquest c'er our liberties, and still
Uphold'st thy hated rule by foreign force,
The very bloodhound of our foreign foes! 760
My blood this day that's shed shall sprinkle deep
The soil, from whence fair freedom's tree shall spring,
And grow until its boughs o'ershadow wide
My native land." He spoke, and suddenly

There burst a shriek from every manly breast,
A shriek, such as to guilty ears speaks loud
Of vengeance. So deem'd Eccelino : then
Fear check'd his faltering voice ; aghast he stood,
Till he beheld that pale blue flame that play'd
Around his victim's head, and seem'd to bid 770
Him strike. Alas ! thy knell is rung, old man !
Thy fated hour has struck ! the tyrant hails
That pledge maternal, and triumphant sees
His natal star, lord of th' ascendant, rise !
Sentence was pass'd, that he, Rainero, should
Beheaded be, his house raz'd to the ground,
His body burned, and ashes thrown to air ;
His wife and children, outcasts on the earth,
Living to curse the treason of a sire !
A sound was heard, a dull, dead sound, that struck 780
The listening ear of night. At morning's dawn
The early passer-by the scaffold view'd,
An instant paus'd to gaze, and then in haste,
Crossing his breast, and on his patron saint
Calling, with look averted, hurried by.
The low'ring clouds, the morning dark and chill,
The weeping skies usher'd the fatal day,
The pond'rous bells, from convent and from church,
Chapel, and dome, swung slow with sullen roar,

And bid the living for the solemn hour 790
Of death prepare. The knell in every breast
An echo found ; loud was the people's grief
(Untutor'd they their feelings to suppress),
And not less deep, though silent, was that grief
That sought not vent in tears, nor spoke in aught
Save the distracted look, the downcast eye,
With leaden gaze, fix'd on the ground, that seem'd
To count each heavy footstep as it fell.
Then was there flocking to the shrines ; nor could
The churches half contain the throng that soon 800
The desert champaign had pour'd forth. Their babes,
That to the breast yet hung, mothers had brought ;
Old men, bed-ridden, dragg'd their limbs to see
Him who had dar'd a tyrant's rage defy !
The prison gates sudden unbarr'd, forth comes
The car of death, drawn by two sable steeds ;
Firm and erect Rainero stands : his brow
As lofty, and his mien as proud, as when,
With the deathless laurel crown'd, vict'ry's meed,
Some Roman conqueror climb'd the Capitol. 810
The patriot joy'd to see his purpose great
Deeply had sunk in every heart ; where'er
He mov'd along, the crowds, on bended knee,
The pious " Miserere " chaunted loud,

As though th' Almighty punish'd all in him.
Furious the soldiers view the scene, and quick
A passage clear; their prancing steeds are urg'd
O'er the devoted throng, who kneel as if
All sunk in apathy, and weary all
Of life, or with a holy zeal inspir'd, 820
To emulate the death of him, who falls
A martyr'd patriot. Firm the scaffold now
Rainero mounts; each voice is mute; no sound,
And scarce the hush'd spectator dares to breathe.
His eye bright beam'd with Heaven's own light; his tongue,
Fraught with surpassing eloquence, pour'd forth
Consolatory words to raise their hopes,
Which now 'neath tyranny's relentless hand
Lay crush'd. "Oh friends, weep not for me," he cried,
"The ruddy drops that soon shall cease to warm 830
My heart, will cry for vengeance from the ground.
That cry is not unheard. I see the storm
'That soon at freedom's call shall wake, nor cease
To rage, till every foul impurity
Of rule despotic far away is swept,
And purify'd our natal air!" No more
Was heard; the clangor loud of trumpets drown'd
His voice. Then on the block his head he laid
Serenely down.—There was a pause—and loud

'The hatchet rung ; and on the scaffold roll'd, 840
Dissever'd from the trunk, the gory head.
Quick from that vast assembled multitude
Rose now a shriek, both loud and shrill, that rent
The skies, and thrill'd each breast ; louder it was
Than e'en the sound of clarion, and of trump,
And martial instrument ; a boding note
It gave, that his illustrious blood
Flow'd not to earth in vain. Then from their knees
Arose the crowd, and with impetuous force
Rush'd on the guards ; the scaffold was o'erthrown ; 850
The soldiers plung'd their swords in kindred breasts ;
And ghosts unnumber'd follow'd his dread shade,
To seek their destiny in worlds unknown.
As when in Carribean seas, sudden
From a dead calm a hurricane bursts forth ;
The gallant ship, that spread her wanton breast
To woo the fickle breeze, unheeding still
The rising storm, a wreck becomes, ere yet
Her crew can furl the sails, or ply the helm ;
Shiver'd like reeds her masts, her canvas torn 860
In thousand tatters, sport of every gale,
She rides a moment, till the angry waves
Break o'er her hulk, and Ocean's rav'nous jaws,
Wide opening, at one gulp, suck in their prey :

Such and so sudden did the people's rage
Rise into madness, as with impulse blind
They forc'd the barrier, and the bleeding corse
Bore off in short-liv'd triumph. Rallying soon,
The scatter'd bands unite ; th' avenging hand
Drew forth the thirsty blade, and threw the sheath. 870
In wrath away. Th' affrighted crowd in turn
Back driv'n recedes, and soon the earth drinks deep
Of human blood. That day saw babes expire
On the same breast whence first they drew the stream
Of life—saw age, and youth, and infancy,
Grandsire, sire, child, in the same carnage fall.

The throng's dispers'd—the din hath ceas'd—the calm
Of death prevails around—no voice is heard,
No hand is rais'd t' obstruct the cavalcade,
That in mock pomp bears to the funeral pile 880
The corse. Where is Rainero's widow'd wife ?
Does she yet linger round the hearth, the home
No longer hers ? With fainting steps and slow,
The threshold now she quits, and follow'd by
Her unfledg'd brood, clasping her hands, obtests
The Heavens to support her woe. Its kind aid
Heaven now doth grant. Majestic in her grief,
She walks through desert streets, with corpses strewn,
The corpses of her friends ; one backward look

She turns around, and sees the miscreants bent 890
On their unholy task, now tearing down
Her roof; shudd'ring she passes on, nor paus'd
'Till on the spot where, sport of every wind,
Are strewn the yet warm ashes of her lord.
Bends Leonora to her mournful task ;
With pious hands collects the sacred dust,
Relics of her unbounded love, to be
Moisten'd by daily tears, so to keep green
The memory of him, and of her wrongs,
Within her soul ; and thought of vengeance deep 900
Into the breast of her wrong'd sons instil.

Ye who have ever known what 'tis to lose
Some dear priz'd object, will in sadness feel
How sweet the consolation thus to cling
E'en to the unconscious dust ; not sweeter is
The breath of Spring's first flowers to him long in
Cities closely pent, he, when, wand'ring forth
At dawn, by pleasant brooks, or on the brow
Of wood-capp'd hill, lists to the early notes
Of lark, that tow'ring o'er enamell'd meads, 910
Blithe swells its warbling throat. Yet greater balm
To her sick soul, the dust of him so lov'd
From common dust to separate. Resign'd
To lesser ills, she bids a last adieu

To Padua's walls:—"Farewell, proud spires, farewell!
Ye, that the site of one vast charnel house
But mark, and, vainly pointing to the skies,
Cover a den of tyrants, bloodier far
Than furious tiger, or that serpent huge
That writhes and venom spits on Lybian sands. 920
O Padua! once for learning fam'd, once fam'd
For magic art, say what malignant power
Has conjur'd up some demon thus to blight
Thy high and palmy state? Within thy walls
I first saw light and grew to womanhood,
Nurs'd by a tender mother's care, who, now
Haply a corse, on the cold ground may lie,
Unwept, unhous'd, food for ravening dogs,
Or birds of prey, that scream and hover o'er
This wretched city lost; or, if she lives, 930
Worse may betide, and reason lose her seat
Within her aged brain. Ah me! methinks
E'en though far-exiled from my native soil,
Her frantic cries, that call upon her child,
Will reach my distant ear. Long years have roll'd,
And days of joy have pass'd, since first a maid,
Modest, with distaff by my side, my spouse
Then sought my hand, whose glorious ashes now
Throughout fair Italy I'll scatter wide.

Oh Italy ! on thee I call to pour 940
Down retribution on the heads of those
Relentless monsters, who thus scourge mankind !
Oh, widow'd wife ! mother of helpless babes,
Who in luxurious plenty have been rear'd ;
By fame, by power, by wealth your cradles were
In childhood rock'd ; cruel's the fate that dooms
Your tender youth to hopeless poverty ;
Your sole inheritance this dust, and hate
Eternal to tyrannic rule ; the dust
Illustrious of your murder'd sire, receive 950
As precious ointment on your youthful heads,
And Heaven adjure in your most holy cause !"

No more she spoke ; by tears and sobs convuls'd
She seiz'd the urn, the ashes on their heads
She sprinkled ; and, while humbly kneeling round
Her children, swore t' avenge their father's death.
The night benign now threw her sable veil
O'er this devoted land, to Leonora
Lost, and by the decrees of fate accurst. 959

BOOK II.

AND now arose the glorious orb of day
To woo the earth, and by his genial heat
To wake to light and life all things, and them
To blest fecundity to bring. He shone
On all, on all diffus'd his gen'rous rays;
Italia (Phœbus' favorite, fairest bride!),
In amorous mood he woo'd, with fruitful gust,
More bless'd than either of her sisters twain,
Iberia proud, or thrice heroic Greece,
Who on each side of her recline, whose feet 10
Ocean doth lave, checking the Afric gale
That sultry blows o'er the Lavinian shore;
He woo'd his best lov'd bride, and saw that from
Her teeming womb flow'd life and joy; replete
With grace, she reigns queen of the temp'rate zone
In her fair Paradise, whose lofty walls
On every side shut out the ruffian winds,
That, furious, from their northern prison 'scap'd,

In gusts alone invade her gentle realm.
O, mighty Alps ! the winds ye thus can stay : 20
But can ye stop the still more ruffian steel,
That arms barbarian conquerors, who climb
Your cloud-capp'd heads, and, like an avalanche,
O'erwhelm the land with ruin and despair ?
Oh, Sun ! thy glory has been shed upon
This realm of intellectual light, (that ne'er
Can quenched be, that has withstood the storm
Of all the passions of the human breast),
Since first the Mantuan Muse of old awoke
Her graceful song (that sung of Ilion 30
O'erthrown : and how that Dardan chief had found,
On the Ausonian shore, a second Troy).
Thou'st view'd fair Freedom in the fullest height
Of her meridian beams, when not thine own
Might vie with her's, that on the dazzled world
Shed day intolerable, and the flight
Of her dread eagles lit to soar afar,
E'en from thy rising to thy ocean couch.
Oh, Italy ! queen of the temp'rate zone !
On thy delicious clime the Sun ever 40
Will soften all thy many grievous ills ;
For he pours forth his floods of light upon
Mountain, and lake, and beauteous field, festoon'd

With graceful vines along, depending from
The juicy mulberry ; nor can his rays
By their thick foliage e'er be dimm'd, which stoop
To turn to brightest gold the plenteous gifts
Of Ceres (with such ardour is she woo'd).
The milk-white oxen, vast in size, that turn
The slimy clods of the alluvial soil, 50
The fruits mature and mellow, and the flowers,
In brightest colours blown, in the great star
Of day rejoice. Hail to your peerless might,
Bright sun-warm'd dames ! who first stand rang'd within
The ranks of Venus—priestesses of love !
Nor for proud stature or full form, the nymphs
That lightly tread Iberia's soil with you
Can vie ; with grace majestic you appear,
And nature pure that majesty adorns ;
Ye too rejoice in his creating rays ; 60
Those rays reflected are in your full eyes,
That beam the ardour and simplicity
Of love, which thus enhance your full-blown charms,
That bloom in all the richness of delight.
Now had the Sun reach'd the mid sky, and shone
On Milan's costly dome, that brilliant stands
In dazzling white array ; of marble built,
Polish'd, it sends a lustre forth, that eyes

Unus'd can dimly see its countless spires,
Statues, and pinnacles, and richest frieze ; 70
A glittering temple gorgeous to behold
It shines without ; within, the awe-struck sight
Might deem display'd a druid's sacred wood,
So sternly frown the columns, that around,
Like giant oaks, fling their vast arms to meet
The fretted roof, where mimic foliage, wreath'd
In thousand forms fantastical, is trac'd.
This glorious fane a generous saint had rais'd,
Saint Charles of Borromeo was he nam'd ;
Pious he was, and deem'd that Charity 80
Was man's most grateful sacrifice to God.
First-born of Heaven, fair Charity ! of Grace
Divine, the daughter thou ! of Nature bland
The emblem ! whose primeval law and thine
Is harmony ; too seldom art thou found
In domes pontifical, (for charity
A most unpriestly virtue is esteem'd
But to belong to weak enthusiasts).
'The martial virtues priests have oft assum'd,
And made the Church of God most warlike here 90
On earth ; for every sect doth ever seek
Dominion proud, sounding the trump of war.
Peace to his ashes, holy saint ! whose life

A satire is to many of his tribe ;
For soft-ey'd Charity, affrighted now
By unrelenting war, hath ta'en her flight
From divers splendid fanes and altars rich ;
And she hath lighted on the desert waste,
Or on the forests vast, where scatter'd man,
Fresh from his Maker's hands, with glowing heart, 100
In man beholds a brother man ; and ne'er
To swell the pomp of some ambitious chief,
Makes war on fellow beings ; but if fierce War
Should with his brazen throat bellow aloud,
The impulse they of nature follow, urg'd
By storm of passion wild, which ever hath
The instinct been of their untutor'd breasts.

Now as the sun shone bright on Milan's dome,
A youthful knight thither his buoyant steps
Had bent ; of noble birth, of gentle blood 110
He sprang ; " Azzo of Esté " was he call'd.
His marquisate did lie within the reach
Of those all-grasping fangs, besmear'd with blood
Of Eccelino da Romano, who
Tyrant of Padua now through the land
Was nam'd. In sooth, to Milan had he come,
This gentle knight, to prove in tournament
The prowess he had shown in early fight.

In Holy Palestine had fought, and he
Had won his spurs; a truce afforded now 120
Fit time to meet in Milan his compeers,
Princes and peers, and knights of Italy,
Who then, in brilliant chivalry arrang'd,
In the mock war prepar'd for sterner blows.
Graceful he was, of stature tall, and yet
Of matchless strength: for hard endurance long,
His fiery spirit, and his anger keen,
Did to his taper limbs strong muscles knit.
No boorish knight was he, whose shoulders broad
A heavy load could bear; but light as roe 130
He sprang along the ground, like to a ball
Struck by the racket, that again doth rise
From the rebound: in saddle firm his seat,
And light his hand that rein'd his pawing steed,
That, Centaur-like, seem'd but a part of him,
When in the lists the knight prepared to run
(With lance in rest) the full career, and dare
The mimic war. Upon his breast he wore
The far-fam'd ruby cross, which he had won
In Holy Palestine; nor gloom did e'er 140
His soul invade; for war and pleasure form'd,
In mirth and revelry he shone; nor less
In bloody fray, where deadly blows are dealt.

He for high emprise and high station form'd,
Fate had prepar'd high cares, and high designs ;
And radiant Hope her many colour'd bow,
Bright beaming 'mid the placid azure sky,
By storms unclouded, to his youthful view
Had giv'n. Th' enchantress only had he known
In joy's bright hour, nor reck'd he of the clouds 150
That haply o'er futurity might hang.
The dome he enter'd to propitiate her,
Heav'n's queen, the blessed Mary ; she who oft,
When parch'd with thirst on Syria's desert sands,
To cooling well or gushing spring had led
His fainting steps ; or, in the fearful strife,
The blow had warded, aim'd by falchion keen
Of Saracen ; or the dark hissing flight
Of winged arrows ; she had arm'd his hand
With force resistless, when his gleaming blade 160
Dealt deep destruction on the Paynim's host.
The dome he enter'd, and devoutly knelt
At her high altar, and his orisons
Pour'd fervently : and then, with soften'd heart,
Slowly he rose from patient knees, and turn'd
To go ; but straight his eyes were fix'd on one
Whom haply he might deem were she to whom
But now his knee was bent : so heavenly fair

That face, so rare and exquisite that form.
Ne'er had he view'd 'mong captive Turkish maids, 170
Or Grecia's daughters, or in Spain, so rich
In beauty, one that could with her compare.
Struggling with grief, faith glow'd in her full eye,
Glist'ning in tears, where hope celestial seem'd
To wake. The youth's most secret soul was mov'd
With pity and intense delight: speechless,
He gaz'd upon the many charms her form
Display'd; and when she rose from bended knees,
She seem'd an angel gliding through the aisle!
All now forgot their prayers, and Azzo gaz'd, 180
Nor thought he that the form on which he gaz'd,
By fate's decree contain'd the potent spell
That now should rule his destiny supreme.
For who can e'er resist their Fate, that still
With hand invisible doth lead mankind?
Fate, that, obdurate, doth command and guide
Each step we take; perchance our next may be
Into the dark and dreaded tomb (from whence
Is no retreat), never again to see
The glorious Sun; nor the all-cheering flood 190
Of life; nor woman's beauteous form,
Our consolation bland; nor promise sweet
Of children young, whose early star might else

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Have beam'd upon our age, and lit anew
Our faded joy : and so forgetfulness
To bring o'er rolling years, that quickly come,
And then are gone, nor, save remembrance frail,
Leave aught behind. But the enchantress, Hope,
Doth spurn the grave, doth even spurn the Fates ;
For she her brilliant banner waves aloft, 200
And tells our vaulting soul, that will not be
Confin'd, that it shall triumph o'er the grave.
Thus Hope with Fate is always in fierce war :
They never will together kindly wend.
Long Azzo gaz'd, yet in that gaze was nought
Save passion's fire, for ne'er the knight had known
Love's chains ; but still had rov'd amongst the gay
And thoughtless nymphs, that likest tulips are,
That please the sight alone : nor e'er had felt
That holy flame that passion can refine. 210
The eye alone will ne'er be fixed ; but fly
From glare to glare : and brighter colours still
Will chase the hues less bright ; but Love his reign
Doth fix in the ecstatic soul, and there
Enthron'd a sovereign lord will be that ne'er
Can be controll'd ; and at his feet lie all
The spoils of war ; and he will play with crowns,
And sceptres too ; still more the Poet's wreath,

Shall by his mighty hands be wove, and Fame
Shall own that oft her trump hath loud been blown 220
By the sweet breath of Love; and Nature all
Declares his magic and unbridled sway!

Say, Muse, who was the beauteous blue-eyed maid,
Theme of my song, that now in haste withdrew,
And to her virgin bower her steps did wend?
On banks of pleasant Brenta was she born;
Almerico di Tadi was her sire;
Of Padua; who, when Rainero fell,
Had perish'd too; nor could his death suffice
To glut the tyrant's rage. The bleeding corse 230
Was from the prison borne; the head lopp'd off:
The trunk unburied lay; and his fair fame
Stamp'd with the brand of traitor's infamy!
Hermione the maid was nam'd, whose form,
Rounded and full, display'd the sanctuary
Of Love; for Love might well have chosen here,
So fair a shrine, to make his long abode.
Of ivory and alabaster blent
Her limbs were form'd in so exact a mould,
That their transparent forms might almost seem 240
To melt in air, or float impalpable,
Like the bright moonbeams in the quiet lake.
Nor, though she thus beauteous, ethereal, pure

As sweetest breath of early flowers, not less
She glow'd a woman to the touch, that might
The type of all her sex have been. Her breast
An altar was, in which did burn a lamp
Exhaustless; whose bright light shed from her eyes
Such rays of tenderness, that e'en might tame
The lion in his rage, and bid him quit 250
His prey, and crouch beneath her feet (for such,
As olden legends sing, is Beauty's power !);
Her voice the silver bells would shame; her hair
Like Terni's waterfall did dazzling shine;
Nor fairer form than hers hath Fancy bright
E'er wove, or Grecian chisel ever form'd:
In marble breathing with ideal grace.

Oh, Woman! arm'd with Love's resistless pow'r,
How oft does terror flash from thy full eye,
And thunder hang upon thy lip? Thy words, 260
Like lightning, wither the proud breast of man,
With all the horrors of the tempest fraught;
And then one sunny smile of thy soft eye
Revives our trembling heart; the shudd'ring chill
Of thy disdain, like clouds, is chas'd away.
Disdain, that fiercer is than lion's roar;
More stern than tyrant's frown, which quite o'ercomes
Our courage high (shame and confusion then,

Like mists, our sick'ning atmosphere becomes).
O'er man, proud man, such is thy wond'rous might, 270
That men for thee do wealth, and fame, and power,
Abandon ; the lead of mankind have left
Submissive to be led by thee. The queen
Of willing hearts thou reign'st ! Thy potent spells
Who can withstand, enchantress ? Who resist
The subtle fascination of thine eyes,
Or the sweet poison that, like Syren's notes,
Drops from thy tongue, and, falling on the ear,
Can e'en to madness turn the brain of him
That's deep imbued with philosophic lore ? 280

In peace and sadness now did glide away
Hermione ; from Brenta's banks had flown
And refuge ta'en in Milan's walls, resolv'd
To find a knight who would her father's death
Avenge ; and, in th' approaching tournament
Would battle do, and brave defiance hurl
'Gainst those who might the bloody tyrant's cause
Espouse. And when again she met the knight,
Who bore the red-cross gleaming on his breast,
In these sad words she anxious urg'd her suit : 290
“ Oh, knight ! who on thy manly breast dost wear
The bloody cross, emblem and pledge of Him
Who died for our redemption ! which declares

That thou wilt shed thine own dear blood for right ;
Hear, then, a wretched damsel's piercing cries,
Whose breast with filial piety o'erflows ;
Who sees by day the vision of her sire,
And nightly hears the dying groans that came
From the bless'd martyr of an holy cause.
Oh, God of mercy ! how his tortur'd limbs 300
Were torn upon the rack ; but from his lips
E'en torture could not rend confession base,
Nor him a vile apostate prove. He met
A traitor's doom ; and now his fame to me
More precious is than ever was his life ;
Though that adored life, that to me gave
My being, now gone, hath quench'd it in despair.
Oh, knight ! upon the charter of thy cross
I call on thee ! Dare to maintain the right :
The innocent uphold : thus in the lists 310
Thy prowess high shall shine, thus the foul stain
May by thy generous blood be washed out."

While thus she spake, his eyes with rage 'gan roll ;
His changing colour went and came, and quick
He drew his breath ; nor could he answer make,
But bounded to and fro, like a young stag
From cover rous'd, who hears the opening pack ;
Insulted, chas'd, yet not afraid, he then

Prepares, indignant, for his doom ; so did
The knight that instant pledge his life, and doom 320
That life to certain death or fame. Then on
His knees he fell, and clasping in his hands
The cross, exclaim'd, " Upon this badge I swear,
By me the rights of this aggrieved maid,
With my good sword, in closed lists, shall be
Maintain'd ; and I will battle do to death
For her, and her just cause. So help me, God !
So help me, Mary's blessed Son ! from whom
Alone my soul's salvation I do hope."
Three sleepless nights he in the chapel pray'd, 330
And, on his knees, invok'd his patron saint.
With penitence and prayer he sought to cleanse
Himself, and from his soul to wash away
The stain of former sins ; that so he might
Fearless approach the fight, prepar'd alike
For death or life. Nor death for him had aught
Of terror ; for he knew that if he fell
He left a deathless fame ; and softest eyes
On earth to weep, still to enhance that fame.
Oh, Love, and Fame, join'd with Religion pure, 340
That flows from grateful hearts alone, and doth
Make charity its special law towards all
The human race ; ye three will e'er unite

Devotion pure, that man doth raise above
The common sphere of man, and liberty
Will then in his enraptur'd bosom glow ;
And in that breast raise high the deadly hate
Of cold malignant power, that e'er doth fret
And sour our weary souls, and gnaw our hearts ;
And oft our steps forlorn lead to the cave 350
Of gaunt Despair, who sucks the blood forth from
Our veins, and leaves our woe-worn carcase nought
But a live corse. Such, base Oppression, such
Thy subjects are ; and such hath ever been
Thy rule detested, that my quick warm heart
Must loathe, and, if a word more strong there be
Than deadly hate, declare it now, oh, Muse !
And, rather than thy reign should long endure,
Let wildest anarchy arise without
Remorse ; and, like an hurricane, sweep far 360
And wide, and clear the pestilential air !
'Tis but to God, and to his holy law,
'That in our purest hearts exists ; for where
Should we the law of God discover ? (where,
But in the pure heart, which is the temple
His hands have rais'd, and where alone should be
His holy altar placed !) 'Tis but to God
That man should e'er bow down ; and ne'er submit,

But through his own consent, by man to be
Controul'd ; but rather brave the bloody field. 370
That bloody field th' eternal bed hath been
Of deathless glory : where, in thy blest cause,
Oh, sacred Freedom, it hath moisten'd been
By the black gore of tyrants ; when the earth,
Thirsty and parch'd by their all-blighting breath,
Hath deeply drunk of the abundant tide !

Scarce had Aurora rais'd her rosy head,
And the ambrosial morn its breath diffus'd,
When to the lists with busy steps they press'd,
Crowds upon crowds. Joy danc'd in every eye, 380
And expectation flutter'd in each breast ;
All eager were to view the pageantry,
With deepest interest fraught ; for mimic war
Converted was to real blows. Heralds
Had loud proclaim'd the challenge, that in fair
Hermione's behalf, her champion brave
Proffer'd to each of Eccelino's knights.
Hail, glorious Chivalry ! soul stirring faith
Of Honour : Honour, that Religion is
To noble hearts ; and binds with stronger chains 390
Than e'er were forg'd from adamant rock ;
Stronger than walled cities ; dungeon keeps ;
Or than the angry mountain waves, that cross

The wide Atlantic, and are onward driv'n,
With force resistless, in the rugged Bay
Of Biscay, 'gainst the Lusitanian shores,
Or Emerald Isle. Bright Honour is a flame
That ever purest burns in noblest hearts,
O'erleaping all restraints that tyrant Law,
Daughter of old Chicane and beldame Power, 400
Would put around us; she whose hungry maw,
Insatiate ever, craves for constant food,
And, like the grave, on carrion e'en will feast.
Avaunt, thou hypocrite! that dost pretend
To dry our eyes, whilst most thou mak'st them weep;
That doth equality assume as thy
First rule! Equal alone in slavery we,
Not in the court of Honour, where the brave
But to the brave are peers:—cold, limping Law!
Thou art the canker-worm that virtue eats! 410

Ne'er had the Sun shot his meridian rays
On scene more brilliant, than was now display'd
In Milan's walls, where Italy pour'd forth
Her beauty and her chivalry: bright dames
(Whose eyes adjudged the prize) and val'rous knights
Assembled in the lists. Above, around,
Hung gayest tapestry; flags of bright hues,
That bore each quaint device of heraldry,

And idly woo'd the scarcely stirring breeze.
The busy hum that day that rose in air 420
From congregated crowds, sounded like roar
Of distant Ocean, when at set of sun
The ebbing tide doth check his rolling waves:
Now flourish'd loud the spirit-stirring sound
Of trumpet ; such a sound, as pealing forth
Gen'rous defiance, nerves the warrior's arm ;
Fires his warm blood, and bids the manly heart
Mock at grim visag'd death ; for base were he,
The craven wretch, who at the trumpet's call
Would quail, nor feel his breast responsive beat ! 430
At the third flourish leap'd the champion forth ;
His armour glitter'd like the evening star,
Brightest in that bright hemisphere, where all
Most glorious were : his helm of polish'd steel,
With gold inlaid, with rich and gay device
Curiously wrought ; his gallant crest did nod
Above ; of plumes of white and red, and here
(As if to mock the gaudy hues around
By its simplicity), a few small stalks
Of bearded wheat were plac'd ; this badge he chose 440
To mark the people's cause he did espouse ;
And his quaint motto was, " God speed the plough."
His surcoat was of richest crimson silk,

And three bright crescents did display, which told
That he had fought in Palestine ; his shield,
Emboss'd with the achievements of his house,
The emblems bore of his illustrious race ;
His horse from far Damascus had he brought ;
Nor purer breed the Syrian desert boasts :
And o'er his milk-white skin were housings thrown 450
Of crimson damask ; light as antelope
That bounds o'er Arab plains, he well became
His brilliant cavalier ; who reining in
His high curvettings, to mid list advanc'd,
And then threw down his gauntlet. Now the sound
Of trumpet call'd the adverse knights to meet
The challenger's defiance ; quicker far
Than the keen hawk does on his quarry pounce,
Sprung to the ground a mailed knight, and seiz'd
The glove ; then vaulting in his seat, he held 460
Aloft the pledge, and loud as tempest's roar
Was then the cry from that assembled crowd.
Guido di Manfredini was his name,
From gay Verona come ; no bolder knight
In the fam'd Ghibelin band his falchion drew.
Skilled in the single combat, or to lead
The squadron to the thickest of the fight,
Where furious blows are rif't ; yet of the skill

Of a great captain, (one whose eye and hand
In every part o'erlooks and guides the fray) 470
Nought had he, though full well he knew to wield
With practis'd arm expert the sword and lance.
Strong his tough limbs and broad his shoulders were,
His face ill-favour'd, seamed o'er with scars ;
His eyes were like the Tuscan boar's at bay,
Fiery and flashing with impatient ire ;
Boisterous in quarrels and nocturnal frays,
His hand was ever prone t' unsheath the blade.
No lady fair he serv'd, but courtezans,
And dice, and goblet-cups, his pastimes were. 480
A Thracian true, on horseback could he live,
Braving both heat and cold, and ready still
Each cause to serve. His armour batter'd was
By frequent hard and heavy blows in fight,
But strong and good ; his harness fitted well,
And his firm hand rein'd in a coal-black steed ;
On famous banks of Guadilquivir fed,
Snorting, he seem'd to spurn the ground he trod,
As if to mark the lofty pride of Spain ;
His rider's crest was black and yellow mixt, 490
The same his surcoat (this his party-badge) ;
A sprig of deadly yew his helm adorn'd,
And his device was, " Might with me is right !"

Two braver champions ne'er in Milan's lists
Before were seen ; preceded by their squires
They pac'd the ring : their perfect horsemanship
Was theme of praise with all. Fearless, haughty
Was Azzo's mien ; but Guido cast at times
Upon his rival a sarcastic sneer
That shew'd contempt, and consciousness of skill 500
Superior. In the foremost lodge appear'd
Hermione : her fair form now was veil'd,
Which shone as doth the sun from 'neath a cloud,
So that the sight can on its lustre gaze.
This blooming virgin, shedding softest rays
From her impassion'd eyes, was now the sun
That shining on this glorious sight, inflam'd
Her champion's heart ; about her head a wreath
Of white flowers twin'd, e'en such at Aulis once
Adorn'd the Grecian virgin's brow, when she 510
For sacrifice in Dian's fane was led.
Nor did Hermione less anguish feel,
Than what o'erwhelm'd her compeer in distress ;
Hermione was now to Italy
Iphigenia to the Grecian host ;
For should her champion fall, might became right,
And in the eye of law the tyrant stood
Approv'd. When Azzo came before the maid,

She rose, and stretching out her snowy arms,
She plac'd around his neck the amber beads 520
On which she told her prayers ; they bless'd had been
By th' holy father, and true witness bore
Of her devotion ; then the red-cross knight
Duteous his head inclin'd, as in these words
She spoke : " Accept, oh, knight, this token true,
That ever duly morn and eve my prayers
To blessed Mary and her Son are paid.
Her grace benign on thee, oh, generous knight,
I call, and aid to thee in hour of need ;
Such as she gave when bleeding, parch'd with thirst, 530
On Lebanon thou lay'st ; or when beset,
Where once the tents of Kedar stood, by bands
Of Paynim warriors, thy bright sword o'erthrew
Rider and horse at one resistless blow.
Hear, then, oh, Mary ! thou who ever hast
The sacrifice devout of my poor heart ;
Strengthen the arm of him who bears the cross
Upon his breast ; with holy courage nerve
His heart, so that the victory be his own !"
These words she utter'd from her inmost soul, 540
Each were breathed in a sigh, deep as drawn
From coral bed that 'neath the blue wave lies
Profound ; now rose her milk-white heaving breast,

Like Ocean's swelling bosom at approach
Of threatening storm : for in that breast she mew'd
A storm, as great as ever swept the Bay
Of Biscay, or the seas beyond the Cape
Of Hope, which oft bold mariners astound !
A tremor seiz'd his limbs and a cold sweat,
Not for himself, but for the blue-eyed maid ; 550
For woman, though they courage give to those
That strive in their defence, full oft do shake
Its tone, when they incision deep have made
In our bewilder'd hearts ; but courage true
Is single, and no compeer nigh will bear ;
Alone she seeks her purpose high, and ne'er
Confounded is by various objects round.
So should th' heroic soul on battle field,
Or scaffold, glow but for bright fame alone.

And now the cheering trumpets call'd away 560
The knights ; the marshals of the lists then plac'd
Each at his post, and breathless silence reign'd ;
An awful pause, as when the low'ring clouds
O'ercharg'd, prepare to burst in thunder down ;
And from o'erwhelming water-spouts on earth,
A summer storm, such as Ontario's banks
Oft see ; or lakes where Huron chieftains freight
Their bark canoes, or track the deer through glades

Of forests, stretching from Atlantic waves
To far Pacific, where the woodman's axe 570
Ne'er echoed, silent since the birth of man.
All breathless wait the issue of the charge,
When with tremendous crash together both
The champions fierce might clasp, and roll in dust.
Again the trumpets blew their loudest blast,
Signal to start : off flew the coursers then,
And ran their short career ; but ere they met
Both swerved ; in contact only came the lance
Of each with each : Guido's on Azzo's shield
Fell plump, and in an hundred splinters flew. 580
But Azzo's graz'd the helmet of his foe,
And broke in twain its lace ; and the strong thrust
Split through and through the lance. The horses wild
Ran foaming twice around the lists, ere that
Their riders, stunn'd, could check their speed, or on
Their haunches them could rein, and fix them firm
To try the combat of their flaming swords.
Then at extremity of lists, their blades
They drew, and wheeling round they flourish high
In air ; and horse's head to horse's head 590
Setting, drove on ; quick Guido turn'd and gain'd
The bridle hand of Azzo, nor delay'd
To use his 'vantage ground, but dealt a blow

That full upon his adversary's helm
Falling, cut through and through the crest, and bow'd
On his steed's neck his head ; the bounding steed
Leapt forward and wheel'd round ; when each to each
Stood face to face, and blow for blow they gave ;
As rapid, and as loud they fell, as strokes
Of shipwright's hammer on the unwieldy side 600
Of some vast admiral ; and hasty sparks
Of fire flash'd frequent from swords, helms, and shields.
The horses now had got their breath, both knights
Great horsemanship display'd, by leaps, curvets,
And rapid turns : so true, so fixed to time,
Their skill and courage ne'er could be surpassed.
Azzo was hot and quick, Guido more cool,
Yet sure ; the Spanish genet readier was
Than the wild Arab horse, yet not so fleet,
Nor good of wind ; Azzo a comet stream'd ; 610
But Guido, like a fixed star did shine.
His loosen'd helm now totter'd on his head,
For in the charge the lace was broken, down
To the earth it fell ; from his partizans
Burst deep a dismal groan, by joyous shouts
Return'd ; and Guido wheel'd his steed around,
Striving to gain both time and breath, for he
Was sorely press'd ; but at the shouts, his horse

He spurr'd, and o'er his head his buckler held.
 Close at his heels the furious Azzo came 620
 At speed ; and, like the deer, his gallant steed
 Bounded : in swift career around the lists
 The rapid race was run, 'mid deaf'ning cries.
 Near and more near the swift pursuer drew,
 With heel in flank and buried spur, and neck
 Outstretch'd. Th' ill-fated Guido soon he caught,
 Pierc'd the sharp sword through his thick neck and throat :
 The bubbling purple stream gush'd out, and gave
 His crest and surcoat a yet deeper dye.

With fearful crash rung heavy on the earth 630
 His arms, as prone he fell just underneath
 The spot where fair Hermione was plac'd.
 Gasping he bit the dust, then heav'd and died.
 Now breathless silence is resum'd ; each eye
 Is fix'd upon the spot on which the knight,
 Welt'ring in blood, lay stretch'd upon the sand.

As when the tender babe opes its soft eyes,
 Just then from sleep awoke, and sweetly smiles
 Upon its mother's care ; so now awoke
 Hermione, rais'd from her giddy trance, 640
 Her deathlike sleep, that fretful dreams had brought
 Constant (since her lov'd father's cruel death !)
 By night ; by day deep melancholy thoughts,

That float like dreams in the bewilder'd brain,
And into chaos turn. So now, awake,
Low at her feet she sees, biting the dust,
The fellest hound that to the tyrant's pack
Belong'd. His visage stern remember'd she
At Padua; that visage now besmear'd
With gore, whose angry spirit quick forth was fled 650
To realms below, there to rejoin the shade
Of Adelaide, and in her train to wait.
Sweet is our triumph, then, when justice gilds
Success, and foes lie humbled at our feet;
When we have suffer'd, sweet to banish far
The cause of suff'rance and endurance hard.
But men endure because at first they fear,
Nor dare resist; yet comes the day at last
Of trial; better, then, resist at once,
Nor for a moment usurpation bear, 660
That gathers strength and grows from sufferance.
Such was the judgment Azzo ever form'd:
His ardent soul saw right or wrong, and straight
Its firm election made; uncheck'd by forms,
Unheeding long delays, he sprang at once
To urge the right of each great cause that lay
Within his path; still ne'er for enterprize
Alone would Azzo ever wander far.
From off the lists the victor now was borne,

Bruis'd, bleeding, and fatigued, his high spirit spent 670
With his great toil ; consign'd to rest, he lay
Nine days on his sick couch. Meantime, the maid
In convent refuge took, and twice nine days,
On bended knees, the homage just of prayer,
For Heaven's great mercy, then vouchsaf'd, she paid ;
Thus might her soul by contemplation sweet
Its happy state regain, and so to rest
Restored be. Where else can find repose
The soul, from troubles 'scap'd, if not in thought
Sublime on things that distant are from us, 680
Or in abstraction deep from scenes around ?
Her piety soon consolation found.
Not so her champion ; in his stormy breast
Far other thoughts than those of piety
Found place. Impatient he of all restraint ;
Inflam'd with love, and haughty from success,
Soon from his couch he sprang, Hermione
To seek ; and thus the tyrant for a while
Forgot, and his own wrongs and ravag'd lands.
In vain Hermione he sought ; in vain 690
The city would he pace : then to the fields
His steps he wended, and, 'mid rocks and woods,
Call'd on Hermione, and Echo taught
To syllable that name. " Where is my love ?

Where is my light, my life? Oh, tell me where
Hermione, belov'd of me, is fled?

Oh tell me where? For instinct true will sure
Now guide my wand'ring steps to her I love;
Since we in soul and sympathy are one."

Wild and uncouth his aspect was; and fierce 700
Despair within his breast her seat had fix'd.

Meanwhile to Eccelino tidings came
Of Guido Manfredini's death; he saw
Resistance rising in another form.

In deep deliberation with himself

He commun'd (for his wont was from himself
Counsel alone to take); but now he found

A void within his breast, nor wist he where
His force he should direct; for brutal force

Had always been his plan. His dagger then 710

He drew, and swore, if the portentous flame,
Omen propitious to his cause, appear'd,

An hundred victims soon to immolate,

T' appease his mother's shade; and, through her means,
Hell to propitiate; for from Hell his power

He drew; there every thought of his dark soul

Was bent; and on the name accurs'd he call'd

As fervently as e'er Hermione

To Holy Mary had her pray'r address'd.

But all was chilling silence round ; no flame 720
Appear'd ; no sign, no omen marshall'd him
The way that he should go. Forebodings sad
Whisper'd that he abandon'd was of those
Whose influence full well he knew was spread
O'er all the powers of earth ; who had thus far
His proud presumptuous fortunes borne so high,
That human nature, sick'ning, had recoil'd,
And slank away ; and of his bloody flag,
Triumphant waving, durst not bear the sight.
In sad perplexity thus plung'd, and toil 730
Most galling to a self-will'd mind, that wont
But to command, and quickly be obey'd ;
Not long he stay'd, nor further argument
Held with himself ; nor longer sought alone
To thread the mazy paths of destiny ;
But rather sought discourse with those, who well
Could him advise, if aught might now avail
Of force, or fraud, to triumph o'er his foes ;
Nor then on human wisdom, human aid,
In his extremity would he rely ; 740
Such he contemn'd, in supernat'ral means
And the black art confiding. Brescia, then,
In haste he sought, magicians to consult
On this, the mighty crisis of his fate.

Th' unholy conclave sat : 'mongst these were names
Of note : Bonatti, Paul Brassano ; join'd
With whom was Reprandino Veronese,
Gerard di Sabimette, he whose birth
Cremona saw ; and (strange to say) 'mongst these
Was found a son of Holy Mother Church, 750
Salione he, canon of Padua !
A Saracen to these, assessor meet,
Was join'd ; his hoary beard fell long, and swept
His breast ; upon his face a constant scowl
Portentous sat, and wither'd where it fell.
Now in the midst of this assemblage dread
Stood Eccelino ; and, with anxious brow,
Prepar'd to hear his fate, and tell his cares,
And thus submissive, yet with wily looks,
Began :—" Oh, men, who know full well 760
The frail foundation of humanity,
Plac'd tott'ring 'twixt two worlds, and sway'd by each ;
Ye who the thin partition well can see,
That from the soul the body separates ;
Who know the cords, invisible, that draw
Men to their fate, and the great influence
Of planets on our births, our lives, and deaths ;
Read me now truly th' altitude of mine,
Compar'd with his of Esté, which seems now

To shine in the ascendant: tell, I pray, 770
Which of us twain is fated to survive,
And which shall gain the day in bloody fight;
For soon in arms all Lombardy will rise:
Then, like a boar at bay, I'll place my back
Against a tree, and fight with cutting tusks;
Stand I or fall, I flinch not; nor will yield
To weak alarms or terrors vain; but now
I crave your great assistance. If your pow'r
Permit, be Azzo of his fame despoil'd
(That like an opening rose begins to bloom), 780
And be it nipp'd i' th' bud! Magicians, Seers,
'Tis Eccelino on you calls! himself
A son of Hell! your power he doth invoke."

With secret joy the dreadful conclave saw
The man, whose name around had terror spread,
And whose infernal aid seem'd spent and gone,
With humble voice to them submissive pray.
Opening the mystic books of magic lore,
And casting Azzo's horoscope, the chief
To Eccelino answer meet return'd. 790
"Azzo of Esté Eccelino shall
Survive; both be by various fortunes toss'd.
Azzo is born beneath the kindly star
Of Venus; but dark Saturn crosses her

To dim her rays ; thus must misfortune come !
Yet Venus ever will, in great events,
Assist him with her happy smiles : for there
Alone Venus is fortunate, when high
The crisis is ; careless in all the modes
Of common life ; but Saturn ever was 800
A most unlucky star (of that be sure !)
So may'st thou oft-times smile at his defeat,
But ne'er shalt see his death ; for o'er thy grave
Shall wave his banner ; though that banner, oft
Torn in the fray, shall reek with kindred blood.
Azzo the champion is of Love and Fame ;
He for the Church doth now stand forth ; but thou,
Who ne'er hast felt the charms of woman, dead
To the warm glow of passion, thou, who fame
Despisest, hat'st the Church, and for revenge, 810
And rule despotic, eager art alone ;
Long wilt thou foil young Esté's great intent
And high design, to free fair Italy
From thee, her scourge ! Our aid we freely give
Against the Church, and Venus' brilliant rays
Shall 'gainst herself be turn'd ; by Love the heart
Of Esté shall enfeebled be, and cause
The Church great scandal ; then disunion fierce
We'll sow amongst her partizans. And now

Retire, for thou our myst'ries must not see ; 820
Nor see how we o'er this devoted land
The blast of discord blow." He ceas'd :
The dreadful incantations then began ;
With horrid imprecations they the aid
Of Darkness now invok'd aloud. Their call
Darkness obey'd ; and growling thunder, driv'n
Through air on wings of murm'ring winds, attests
The power of those dark seers, who in dire storms
Alone can work ; but powerless are for aught
Of good. And first, to aid their dev'lish art, 830
From Lapland's gloomy shores a witch was call'd :
Daughter of Boreas she, of him who bred
In Hyperborean forests wont to be
The carrier dread of witches and of ghosts ;
Who swift cut through the chilling air of night
To frighten mortals ; then such dismal pranks
To play, that tell our conscience there exists
Another world, 'twixt which and this do flit
Unbodied spirits, bringing oft ('tis said)
Tidings of those long dead ; and murders foul 840
Will come to light by agency unknown.
Conscience is their ally, that tells the cheek,
Blushing with shame, and throbbing heart alarm'd,
Those dismal messengers are nigh at hand ;

And then our swimming sight inverted sees
Th' unwelcome preternat'ral guest ; dissolv'd
In a cold dew we stand transfix'd by fear.
The instinct of the soul this truth sublime
Teaches, that souls exist unknown, unseen,
That do not wholly live in bodies, nor 850
Yet out ; but half within and half without
This earthly frame, the wand'ring soul exists.
Quick at their bidding came the witch : her birth
Was said of Boreas, and those vapours dank
That poisonous herbs produce, and reptiles foul,
That but exist in filth and slime, and seem
To crawl to life, and live in the despite
Of Nature bountiful, that beauty loves.
Of all God's wond'rous works, most wonderful
The wind ! we feel it blow, but none can tell 860
Whence cometh it, nor where it goes ; but men
Oft tremble at its voice ; when in its rage
Houses it hurls to earth, and uproots trees,
Lashes the torpid sea to scale its banks,
And in th' excited surge engulphs whole fleets.
For winds of motion an essential are ;
About this earthly planet do they play ;
In its eternal round, in its career
Around the sun the unknown wind doth sport.

Swift as a cloud before the wind, the witch 870
From Lapland flies ; swift as contagion that
Rides in mid-air, bringing disease and death
To living beings, when drowsy sciroc droops
Our languid heads. Now as the midnight hag
O'er rugged Caledonia flew, her seers
A quicker second sight obtain'd ; and when
She tack'd to catch a stronger gale, passing
Over Teutonic realms, more mystic straight
They grew. 'Tis thus when superhuman powers
In motion are ; then quick contagion all 880
Infects ; wars do they bring, rumours of wars,
Conspiracies, and plots, and fears, and sad
Alarms, that do men's peace disturb, and o'er
A land dread famine spread : nations often
Will walking ghosts become, half dead above
The ground, changeless their state below : plagues
And flights of locusts, Egypt's curses, all,
Redundancy of Nature ever meant
To cure, and above all, those wicked pow'rs
Cease not to stimulate fell tyrants' breasts, 890
Which rifest are of horrors manifold,
More cruel and destructive than all those
That spring from Nature ; being but Nature's dross,
Of which she's purg'd ; but tyrants' blisters are

On human kind, the ready instruments
To do the will of the dread powers of Hell.
And now arriv'd before them stood the sprite ;
A form she took of ugliness beyond
What could by pencil be pourtray'd ; her head
A cone appear'd ; her chin and nose did meet ; 900
Her eyes were small, oblique, with squinting leer ;
So that the vision cross'd ; all to the left
The right eye did command, and so the left
View'd all to right ; a hunch was tow'ring o'er
Her back ; her leathern dugs hung down below
Her waist ; her skin resembled parchment, smok'd,
And shrivell'd up ; her thin and bony arms
Hung to her knees ; her fingers were like claws
Of griffins, crook'd and arm'd with rounded nails,
Sharp-pointed, firm, and strong to rend the flesh 910
From bones ; her teeth were ebon tusks, and from
Her mouth there issued sick'ning sulph'rous smells,
And a blue flame was visible, that breath'd
Fell pestilence from out her lips, which seem'd
Form'd for an outlet to the Stygian lake.
Such fetid vapours hang o'er stagnant pool,
And are of reptiles vile the atmosphere.
Whene'er she spat on earth, from out the slime
Toads numberless crawl'd into loathsome life.

Clubb'd and inverted were her feet, like hoofs 920
Of asses, and her ears became erect
Whene'er she heard a noise: her stature tall,
Gaunt, thin, and bending like a bow; her voice
Would vary quick, in every sound of bass
And tenor, loud, or sharp, or shrill, or low;
And though she could, at pleasure, any form
Assume, yet this was still her common shape.
Buffa 'yclept was she, an agent dread
Of Fate, that led but to mislead mankind,
Like vapour glimm'ring o'er the treach'rous marsh. 930
Pander was she to pleasures wild and short,
That bring long sorrow and long pain to those,
The victims of her wiles; the portress still
Of Pleasure's temple she, that opes the door
To joy; that's follow'd soon by woe, long rued,
By heartfelt sickness, madness, and despair:
(Ills which alway from Buffa's pleasures flow);
For when she opes the door, a temple see,
Brilliant with dazzling lights, and gallant feasts,
And midnight masquerades; gay nymphs in crowds, 940
But 'neath whose masks lurk painted courtezans;
Then hear the merry sound of leaping dice,
That nought of mirth inspire; behold each face
Anxious, on mischief bent; no joy is theirs,

Not e'en successful gamesters ; or if joy,
'Tis but the devilish triumph of a fiend,
Exulting in another victim's fall.
Pass on, and view another scene ; three caves,
Whose entrance is besieg'd by dismal crowds
Of antic shapes, of pain and dire disease, 950
And loss of wits, and hopeless deep despair :
And o'er the portal of each cave is writ,
" Bedlam, or Prison-house, or Hospital."
Dire are the groans that issue thence, the cries
Of moody madness, suff'ring and despair,
That oft in suicide their respite seek.
Buffa, the sore'ress, leads the dreadful dance
Of all her train : on her attendant are
A tribe of imps, all rob'd in black, whose looks
Sly and demure appear : with hound-like tone 960
They scent the track of discord and of guile.
They to their wondrous nose add force of tongue,
That they can use at will, and still prefer
Falsehood to truth : these meddle in affairs
Of men : and, by their magic spells, the rich
To hopeless poverty reduce ; and oft blot out
From nations' annals names of brightest note.
Freedom oft-times they laud ; their damning praise
Does but on Freedom deal a deadlier blow.

These yelping curs their game pursue, and drive 970
Into the first two caves. Others anon
Follow ; the green-eyed monster, Jealousy,
That, like musquito, frisks and stings, and oft
Escapes, returns and stings again, our grasp
Eluding : Envy, fretful knave, that doth
His own heart eat, and suck his blood, to spite
Those whom he cannot reach : Scandal was there,
Camelion like, who borrows every hue :
A beldam vile, with an alarum tongue,
That, like a clock, still strikes, and strikes amiss. 980
All these, the spawn of Pleasure's nauseous dregs,
Now the magicians Buffa summon'd forth,
Upon their errand with good speed to go.
Their purpose Azzo to beguile by charms
Of fair Hermione, and thus delay
The war : the powers of darkness thus were leagu'd
In earth and Hell against the cause of truth.
Soon as the witch her high behests receiv'd,
Away she flew, and Azzo soon she met
In a dark grove. Buffa, the garb assum'd 990
Of peasant's wife, and chesnuds gathering was ;
Whom when he saw, in frantic accents thus
Azzo began ; " Where is Hermione ?
My life ! my love ! oh, tell me where again

Shall I Hermione behold ? that form,
Which, cast in Nature's fairest mould, all forms
Transcends, and sight and touch alike delights ;
Whose breath is sweeter far than breath of cows,
Grazing in pasture fresh in dewy morn,
And honey from her lips distils, to heal 1000
The wounds her wit has made ; tell me, then, where
My love is fled ?" Sallow his cheek, and pale ;
The warlike lustre of his eye had fled,
And left a vacant look, that shew'd his wits
Were gone upon the air ; scatter'd like hounds
At fault, and making casts to catch the scent.
The witch, in humble guise, address'd him thus :
" Not far from hence in convent is immur'd
A lady fair, Hermione she's called ;
From Milan lately come, and surely she 1010
A saint must be ; so beauteous and devout
Her guise. Proceed no farther ; but rest here
Until the morning breaks, and then thee straight
Unto the convent gate will I conduct."
Her words not pierc'd his ear alone, but sunk
Deep in his heart ; from off his steed he fell
Senseless to earth, as if by arrow shot,
That whizzing comes from forester conceal'd,
Burying its barb'd head deep in the sides

Of hapless stag, that low his antlers' pride 1020
Stretches on earth. So Azzo fell ; his length
Meas'ring beneath an oak ; the witch rejoic'd ;
For now the sun had sunk, and e'er the moon
Could rise, her incantations she began,
Which took more hold in that sad state, when sense
Had fled, and left th' ungovern'd blood to flow
Without command, when the rebellious nerves
And muscles will obedience oft refuse.
The image of pale death was on his face
Deep stamp'd ; the witch resum'd her frightful form,
She cull'd of hemlock and of deadly herbs,
And took of reptiles vile, and pois'nous snakes,
That at her call did come ; and these she squeez'd
To death, and then the compound in her lap
Kneading, the juice she sprinkled o'er the knight.
His boiling blood inflam'd, he started up
And wildly star'd around, but nought he saw
Save the bright moon, which in his madness, he
Did curse, like one distraught ; then down he sank
In fev'rish sleep again, and dreadful dreams 1040
Haunted his soul, and chas'd his rest away.
He would have started up stagg'ring abroad
Had not thick night his eyelids press'd with force
And kept them down, whilst drowsy slumbers firm

Encompass'd all around, and held him fast,
Like a fish flound'ring in th' entangled net.
And now was spent the ling'ring painful night;
When the sun open'd Esté's baleful eyes,
They gleam'd around, and soon the woman spy'd.
He plung'd his fev'rish head in cooling stream, 1050
And deeply drank; then springing on his horse,
From the dark grove he rode: before him tramp'd
The witch, in the same guise that first his view
She met. Deep in a vale, by river clear,
An ancient convent stood, whose lofty walls
Reflected were in the dark stream that flow'd
Silent beneath the emblem true of life
Monastic there, whose even tenor glides
Unruffled ever, save when swell'd by hopes
Of joys eternal, that the tide of pray'r 1060
Can raise abundant, like the swell of rain
From Heav'n that copious in the winter falls.
Around the spot sequester'd orchards grew,
Whose creaking boughs were bent with heavy fruit;
Rich painted gardens, flow'rs of every hue,
That Nature's brightest liv'ry wore, when deck'd
In gala suit, nourish'd by cooling founts,
That as they fell, meand'ring ran below,
Inviting oft gay mirth to interrupt

The silence of the convent's mystic gloom. 1070
Such was the casket which the brightest gem
Of Italy immur'd ; of all the flow'rs
That in the garden grew, the fairest she.
All day did Azzo ponder his design,
And counsel of the unknown sprite did take,
Who with pretended artlessness beguil'd
The tedious hours ; his confidence she gain'd,
And through his passions enter'd in his soul.
Just at the fall of night, by twilight gray,
The knight approach'd the door, and loudly there
Admission crav'd, upon the charter good
Of his red-cross : then rushing in, the sound
Of organs deep and anthems follow'd, till
He to the chapel came. Once more before
The altar high Hermione he saw ;
Entranc'd he stood awhile ; meantime the witch
Sprinkled the deadly juice upon his head,
Mutt'ring her incantations, and her spells
About him threw ; the victor vanquish'd was,
Hell's power alone could then his breast nave swerv'd
From right, and in a moment thus destroy
Whole years of piety, of virtuous deeds.
Alas ! how chang'd from him in Milan's dome,
When first Hermione he saw, and on

His bended knees swore by his ruby cross
For her, and in her cause, to fight to death.
But now his virtue in abeyance was,
And his fierce passions loose and wild had toss'd
In dreadful anarchy his breast ; around
Her waist his arms he threw ; like Sabine maid 1100
High on his neck he bore his prize away ;
And rushing forth, on his swift steed he sprang.
The witch gave horse and rider greater force,
Invisible she guided then the reins,
And to his nighest castle stretch'd across
The fields with speed that might the wind surpass.
So swift they rode, that ere the close of night,
Th' enchanted courser thunder'd o'er the bridge,
Which of itself came down : the doors op'd wide,
Soon as the witch wav'd her dread hand unseen ; 1110
And 'neath porcullis of the warlike gate
Rung loud the chatt'ring hoofs through silent courts,
And rous'd the slumb'ring watch, who gaz'd with fright
Upon their lord, and his unlook'd-for guest.
Oh, black and hideous Night, that seemest thick
With horrors, from thy womb, which none can pierce !
Though it engenders murders, sins, and crimes,
On which the actors dare not cast their eyes,
But through thick crape, with which thou bandagest

Their sight. The womb of Night doth deeper lie
Than deepest caverns of the deepest sea :
For all our hot desires, and wayward plans,
And desp'rate acts from it recondite spring ;
Symbol of Hell and Death ! whence come thy joys,
If not from mimicry of brightest day,
In sumptuous banquets, or wild jest of mask,
In frolic dance, or boist'rous revelry ! 1127

BOOK III.

THOU sweetest bard of our poetic isle,
Soaring on magic wings in magic realms,
Above the sphere that wildest Fancy e'er
Could reach ; thy sweet lay tuning in the land
Of Fairy, sweeping with a master's hand
The harp of plaintive Erin, that thou took'st
To aid thy song on shady Mulla's side,
When at high noon batt'ning thy flock beneath
The brow of Mole, on fields erst dyed with gore :
But then enamell'd by Spring's fair first-born, 10
Bright, many-colour'd Flora, who the wreaths
For shepherds weaves, to deck their saucy loves,
(For shepherdesses so much woo'd are coy) ;
Teach me to blend thy lofty trumpet stern,
With sweetest sounds, drawn from thine oaten reed,
More frolic far than those of Mantuan bard,
When he on Mincio's flowing margin sung
Blvthe roundelays, among the graceful swains

Of past'ral Italy, for ever blest.
Smooth now my rugged, inharmonious verse, 20
To tell the feats of the all-conqu'ring boy
Of the Cytherean Queen, whom few can 'scape,
Whene'er his deadly poison on the winds
Contagious flies, and on each sunbeam sits.

And now my Muse with bolder wing unfurl'd,
Dare into realms of frolic fancy soar,
Stretching above those uncongenial mists
That morbid hang around this earthly sphere,
Damping the gen'rous ardour of each soul
That pants for joys that Fancy only gives. 30
And thou, bright Fancy! Fairy Queen, true born
Of Heav'n, since thou to Heav'n hast power to raise
Our raptur'd being, and e'en on the dull earth
Encompass it about with fragrant clouds
Of myrrh and incense; thy twin sister she,
Hope, joyous ever, like the rosy morn
With golden key unlocks the splendid day.
When Fancy flags, then jolly Bacchus comes,
Our drooping brows with ivy crowns, shuts out
The gloomy shapes that paint mortality, 40
Deep in Elysium the hot senses steep.
Then Venus, sprung from spray of Ocean foam,
Waves her white hand and beckons to her bow'r;

Her bow'r, wherein all life's distill'd, and whence
Our being's essence drawn, and mortals gain
Th' attribute of the life-inspiring Sun !
From Heav'n creative powers show'ring descend
For Nature rules, and Passion fires the train
That makes life give life, spreading wide and far,
Throughout the world with life the world inflames ! 50

Three days Hermione entranced lay ;
The potent spells her living limbs held fast ;
Slow crept her blood, and scarce a breath escap'd
Her closed lips ; nor sigh she heav'd, nor beat
Her pulse. Nature, enchain'd, confess'd a force
Beyond her scope, and greater far than hers :
For life and death united were ; and each,
Fast lock'd in other's arms, like lead, lay on
Her breast, compress'd as if on pillow doze,
Death slumber'd through her veins, and crept within 60
Her brain, and there effac'd the records all
That on her mem'ry's tablets late were trac'd.
And when at length she woke, vows, convent, flight,
All were forgot, and nought remain'd on her
Benighted mind but Azzo's brilliant form ;
Her true knight prancing on his foaming steed,
Shining like Hesp'rus, shedding brightest rays
On wond'ring Night, that's dazzled with his beams.

But now the saintly maid was quite enthrall'd
In Buffa's wiles ; and faithful honour'd dames, 70
And modest maidens pure, in trammels like
To these are caught ; so spreads the treach'rous net
Its meshes wide, to catch the flutt'ring bird.
Hell on her breast had breath'd ; tainting, within,
Its heav'nly grace ; though still, without, it shone
Fair to the eye, as the untrodden snow.
Now from that trance awoke Hermione,
No more a pure and mystic holy nun !
Behold her now surrounded by a train
Of damsels fair ; her eyes, like fire-flies light, 80
Passion and tenderness emit, and love
Create ; her noble forehead clouded round
With golden hair, whose tresses clust'ring fell
Profuse, and half conceal'd her glowing form.
Her coral lips, half open, shew two rows
Of shining pearl ; and, from between, her tongue,
Arm'd with love's poison, serpent like, steals out
T' instil the rapid venom through the veins,
Madd'ning to extacy the boiling blood.
Then the expansion of her bosom see, 90
Like snow without, but Etna's mount within ;
Whose heavings shew that its volcanic flames
Still rage within, nor e'er can be compress'd,

But show'r their liquid lava from her eyes.
The nymphs her graceful person now adorn :
In richest silks enrob'd, of Tyrian dye,
She floats upon the air, winding her way
With loveliness supreme. Her iv'ry arms,
Like zephyr's wings, waft new delights ; and round
Those arms, as on triumphal arch of war, 100
Bracelets are hung, rich trophies of her love.
The richest gems of Esté's house declare
Her conquests ; her fair brow with diadem
(And well that brow a diadem became)
Is crown'd ; her fingers are with jewels dight ;
Rubies, that seem like drops of blood, that start
Through the white skin, to stain those hands whose touch
Thrills through the veins (for oft the God of Love
His arrows makes of maiden's fingers fair) ;
Around her roseate lip, in wanton play, 110
Circled a thousand smiles, that gracious joy
Diffus'd on all. With step majestic, yet
With winning ease and love inspiring looks,
She grac'd the noble throng of gentle knights,
And ladies fair, who jocund, gen'rous all,
Deck'd the rich garden of bright chivalry.

The court was throng'd with courteous knights, gentle
In blood, with manners mild, and gracious speech ;

And most were comely, stout and tall ; and well
Had prov'd their mettle in the bloody field ; 120
And high renown had wove a laurel crown
For noble foreheads bare, and war-blanch'd locks ;
For glory, like Medea's cauldron fam'd,
To age can e'en restore the fire of youth.
Sweeter than May-day flowers, fair ladies there,
With sighs, responsive to the am'rous glance
Of courtiers' eyes around, confess'd a love
Above all gnawing jealousies. No time
Had they for jealousy : the trumpet might
Each instant call their knights to start quick from 130
Their ladies' feet, far o'er the distant plains
To wend their way, and leave fair eyes to weep.
Now to the sumptuous banquet in the hall
She mov'd ; in grace another Helen she,
But not, like her, rous'd she another Greece
To arms ; but rather held the warrior's soul
In base subjection, and thus quench'd the war,
And quench'd no less the flame of liberty.
Around the spacious hall the festive boards
Were set, and to the fretted roof of gold 140
The sav'ry smell of the great feast ascends.
Here all the chace's spoils, with product rich
Of fruitful plains, rivers, and lakes, and sea,

Behold ; for every beast, and fowl, and fish,
That to the palate grateful are, were by
Process of curious chemistry now wrought,
Each flavour that keen appetite provokes ;
Pungent, or sweet, or savoury, or high,
Delightful to the taste, or smell, abounds.
The rich repast is crown'd with floods of wine ; 150
And copious draughts on draughts quicken the night,
That, like a modest maid, doth fly too soon
From reveller's embrace : here revellers
Were found that day to night would join, and nigh :
Again would their loud mirth triumphant rouse.
Among the streams of Bacchus there that flow'd,
The cooling Rhenish wine was quaff'd : pungent
And fresh to slake impatient thirst, that loves
Deep draughts ; then to revive, the gen'rous grape
That ripens dry and hot on Etna's side ; 160
Or that from distant Cyprus comes, or from
The gardens that did boast the pillars fam'd
Of Hercules ; and golden fruits, that grew
Where Phœbus bathes at eve his chariot wheels.
Then deep libations to the jolly god
Are poured forth from Tuscan flasks amain,
The juice that oozes from warm Chianti's side
In ruby drops, and flavour full and rich,

That, rushing through the veins, will deeper dye
The heated blood, and rouse the flagging soul 170
To sing of love or war : such is thy fame,
Oh Chianti rich, first of Italian wines !
The waxen torches, flaring round the hall,
Gleam'd their wild light on fresco-painted walls ;
There the achievements of fam'd Esté's house,
With Ghibellin and Saracen are seen ;
And banners floating from the lofty roof,
Bloody and torn, the warlike times denote.
They flare upon each ripe and jocund dame,
That smiles upon her gallant cavalier ; 180
Who, in her warm and melting moods, receives
His pay for trouble, danger, and long toil,
For watchful sleepless nights, or thirsty march
On Eastern desert, in the Holy Wars ;
Whose happy lot now brings transition sweet
From Death's grim arms to the warm arms of Love.
Inflam'd by midnight revelry, unblam'd
Such revels are ; for warriors e'er unblam'd,
Who sleep for others on the cold hard ground,
And brave the raging sea, the heat, and frosts. 190
Fame is capricious found, paying but few ;
And though not all deserve the laurel crown,
Yet all alike can weave a chaplet blythe

Of myrtle green, and ivy interwin'd,
That drives dull care away : for what can make
Life so desirous as gay revelry ?
Unlike the court of Eccelino, that
Dismal and stern, where stalk'd dark tyranny
With dreaded tread, and had affrighted far
The loves and graces, who alone can charms 200
Throw around life, doom'd to so many ills ;
And war, greatest of all, if not begun
For Fame, first-born of immortality,
Or nation's chains to break, for freedom's cause.
But Azzo's court was with high honour fraught,
And grac'd with Love and Fame ; best passions those
That e'er inspire the human heart, or wake
The minstrel's song ; and on his brows the crown
Of deathless laurel bind, who sings them well :
For Love and Fame are both the minstrel's meed ; 210
And Fame will catch the slipp'ry urchin god
And hold him fast, despite of all his wiles.
Beside the Esté sat the peerless maid ;
Well had he mark'd her full deep azure eye,
And golden tresses, that luxuriant play'd
About her front, as marble clear and smooth,
In richest shining braids entwin'd : her lips,
All eloquent in smiles, responsive were

To the bright lightning of her feeling eye.
Her grace bewitching all around, few men 220
Could see, and then not feel the mystery
Of love, that sudden binds the wildest heart,
And sinks it in the aching breast forlorn :
For the first burst of love is e'er forlorn,
And hopeless seems ; for vain it seems so soon
T' aspire to Paradise : it hopeless seems
To reach so soon the goal of earthly race.
But Azzo now, with love and wine confus'd,
His passion told : a blush suffus'd her cheek,
As the fond youth his am'rous suit preferr'd : 230
She, gently chiding, rose, and straight withdrew
Flush'd with the grape, and wild with hot desire,
Quick follow'd he her steps, and left his knights
To spend in joyous revelry the night :
Some with the ruby bowl, some with the dice,
Some in the dance, and some in am'rous sighs.
In evil hour she yields : by Buffa's wiles
Beset, bewilder'd, and perplex'd (as maids
Are oft when no escape is near, and when
They know not where to fly). As Daphnè once 240
Before the glorious god fast flew, so would
Hermione have flown, swift as the light
Camilla, o'er th' unbending corn ; but she

Was like the stricken deer ! Aurora threw
Her earliest rays upon their wanton loves,
Soon as she sprang from old Tythonus' bed,
And smil'd ; for she illicit loves oft hath
Disclos'd, and to the babbling day hath shewn
What Erebus' dark sister would have hid,
Throwing her black and spangled veil o'er all 250
The secret frolics of the laughing queen ;
When on her wanton bed are toss'd the nymphs
And swains that there her sacred rites observe.

Great Venus, hail ! life-giving Queen of Love,
Hail to thy myrtle green, the sceptre fair
Of thine eternal universal sway !
Sceptre that monarch's sceptres rules, and in
Abeyance holds their mighty pow'r, when thou
On their thrones beamest, mightier far than they.
Glorious the conqu'ror's toil, and high his joy 260
When vict'ry crowns his brows ; but greater still
Thy conquests are, for conqu'rors will attend,
Panting, upon thy steps ; submissive bow
To thee ; thine aid implore, whose haughty eye
Has frown'd defiance on mankind ; whose arms
Have smote fierce nations down ; who on their necks
Have stamp'd ; yet, before thee, the lords of men
Will prostrate lie ; and giddier fumes than rise

From wine, will turn our dizzy brains. And thou
Shalt play with hearts, as with a ball, and toss 270
Them to and fro, and they shall serve for thy
Gay pastime : the fix'd constant heart shalt thou
Unfix, and throw upon the gale. Thou fly'st
In middle air, and right and left dost cast
The seeds of life, which straight to being spring,
All from thy wondrous force : thy fruitful womb
Is vaster than the sea, and deeper still.
All hail to thy great power, oh, queen divine !
Who in thy softer mood, with bland delight,
Consolest ever the wan drooping wretch, 280
And sorrow from his eyes dost wipe ; courage
Thou givest to the chasten'd breast ; all dost
Thou give, oh goddess ! for thou givest life !
Without thine aid the gen'rous earth would sleep,
Sterile and bare, and all her genial heat
In her own bowels ever keep compress'd.
Thou risest from the briny wave, and then
Shaking thy graceful tresses long, the dew
That falls adown, sprinkling the teeming earth,
Elicits quick the fire from out her veins. 290
Then life springs forth, in liquid vesture veil'd ;
Last of its vast variety of form
Comes man, and fowl, and fish, and tree, and plant ;

But reptiles venomous, and poisonous herbs,
Are but the noxious dross which life throws off.
Mother of universal life, thy joys
Are equal to thy purpose vast ! thy power
From thy full joys doth constant flow, and hence
All nature owns thy universal sway !
But ne'er upon thine altar sacrifice 300
Was for thy fruitful worship ever made,
That with more grace became thee e'er, than this
Which now the laughing morn, in frolick mood,
Disclos'd ; and Phœbus haply might have frown'd
But from respect to thee, oh, Queen of Love !
And Beauty, and of Grace, for here entwin'd
Lay in each others' arms Love, Beauty, Grace,
Join'd with a soul great Mars that might become,
And Virtue too ; if high contempt in him
Of death, for others' sakes, be virtue nam'd, 310
Azzo then virtuous was ; Hermione
Most fair ; bright chivalry will hardly blush
For transient errors of the brave and fair ;
Nor blushes for the am'rous dalliance soft
That doth exhilarate love's sweet disport.
This is th' extatic part of love supreme,
That universal life doth celebrate ;
No love, no life ; without love, life and death

Would undistinguish'd be, in chaos still
Remain, without or mould or contrast felt ; 320
For love's the spur that pricks life into being.
Now from such sweet disport, silent arose
Azzo, and gently stealing forth, fast lock'd
In arms of balmy sleep he left the nymph,
To calm the tumult that had fir'd her veins.
Like the pale lily lies she, that demands
Spring's earliest show'rs to raise its drooping head.
Sleep now on her its dews refreshing pours,
And to her cheek restores its wonted bloom ;
The loves and graces, that erst play'd about 330
That face so fair ; whose downy softness glow'd
With roseate hues of health and youth adorn'd.
So glows fair Spring's first flowers, when birds in their
Green leafy bow'rs chirp loud their grateful hymn
To genial Nature ; life in spring sings loud ;
The universal hymn through woods and fields
Resounds ; in life and giving life all things
Rejoice, and hail the goddess' mighty sway.
Unquenched life no ills can root thee out ;
Invet'rate force of being, thou springest up 340
On Desolation's heels, when she abroad
Stalks ; rous'd by passions desperate, that life
Upon her reeking altars immolates,

And tramples on life's charter, Liberty,
That life doth plant upon the desert waste.
A people never die though oft enchain'd,
And tied to clods of earth; yet life springs up
E'en under tyrants' feet, despite of all
The ills that brooding sit in their dark souls.
Nor have the vaulted roofs of Hell, that flame 350
With fire unquenchable, as yet burst forth
To burn out life: and if, resistless thus
Its charter, Freedom it shall once obtain,
It shall not rest content with its mere being,
But claim its native right, too long withheld,
And spurn the slavish coward from its fold.

Awhile, oh, Muse, spare me the trumpet's blast,
And tune thine oaten reeds to sing more soft
And past'ral lays: say how the Red-cross Knight
Enchanted was, oft as Hermione 360
He saw; no pain from wounds he felt, or blood
Shed in the tournament, for med'cine sweet
Her presence fair administer'd, to heal
The pain herself had caus'd; and at her sight,
His languid blood would quickly ebb and flow.
Less than divine she seem'd not; from her steps
By him unmark'd before, flow'rs seem'd to spring,
As if her presence would their sweets augment.

When her breast bent beneath her deep-felt love,
It might the lily teach graceful to droop 370
Its downcast head with modesty supreme ;
And rais'd again, on wings of buoyant joy,
And glowing in th' intensity of bliss,
The full-blown rose from her might learn to blush ;
Blushes, that from the heart send the warm blood
To tinge the cheek, witness of warm desires.
Oh, Woman ! in thy very weakness strong,
How dost thou govern at thy will our being !
Spark of electric flame, that this vast world
Set'st in a blaze ; and canst each passion raise, 380
Or sooth ; our hearts hold firm within thy grasp,
Or let them loose to conquer and destroy,
By mad ambition fir'd for love of thee !
The flame of love, which glows and flashes from
Its everlasting torch, mantles thy form ;
And as the sun constant attracts the earth,
So man attractest thou : in thee the germ
Of heroes lies, ripen'd by passion strong.
All hail ! thou magnet of the human breast ;
Thou compensation true for every ill ! 390
Such was Hermione, soul of her sex,
And Azzo's appetite grew with the food
On which it fed, nor e'er could be o'er-cloy'd.

In her he constant found new charms and sweet
Variety ; soft as the Spring, more bright
Than Summer solstice, and, as Autumn, ripe ;
And cold could be e'en as the Winter's snows.
Mistress, and wife, and friend, and sister she,
Light of his path, that led his steps astray
From that great way, which to the skies doth go. 400

High on a knoll Esté's proud castle stood,
Yet not so frowning and severe as those,
The gothic castles of the north, for wrecks
Of Roman art and Grecian taste remain'd
In Italy ; so, for defence, might this
Great palace still be strong, and pleasure yet
Might revel through its spacious halls. See court
Adjoining court, with fountains that might cool
The noontide air ; and statues that around
In bronze and marble frown ; and galleries 410
To catch the fresh'ning breeze of eve ; or, in
Winter, to loiter in the sun, and bask
In his mild rays ; long files of chambers vast,
Within delight the eye ; the rich wrought walls
With paintings of fair Venice are o'erhung.
Daughter of Ocean, Venus' altar bright,
Whence rose the fragrant fumes of incense, sprung
Of pleasures soft : Venice ! the temple thou

Of all delights, that through thy liquid streets
In gondolas luxurious glide ; once queen, 420
A widow now thou art, in mourning weeds,
And with deep shame abash'd : thy famish'd brood
Gath'rest around thee, and thy free-born neck
Bends 'neath the foot of conqu'ring foes. Time was,
When thou erect beardedst the Crescent in
Its proudest day, and spread thy many sails,
That glitter'd in the orient sun, and wide
Didst plant the Adriatic, like a wood,
With thy tall masts. Venice ! alas ! thou now
Art wither'd up by all the blighting blasts 430
Of tyrants' breath ! Ill-fated city, mourn,
Who proudly 'scap'd from Atala, when wide
And far the brands of fires barbarian flar'd,
Yet hast thou not escap'd from modern wiles,
More mischievous than brand of Atala :
For modern guile of nations makes one vast,
One living tomb ; where man and brute alike
Inurn'd, doze on in lowly brotherhood !
And ye, vile slaves, avaunt ! who flourish yet
In free-born states, and strive to drag them down, 440
And hang them o'er with chains. Reptiles, who spit
Your venom on mankind, take heed, though oft
Ye bask in sunshine of false fortune's smiles !

Beneath the castle, rock was pil'd on rock,
Skirted with wood ; and underneath cool grotts,
Impervious ever to the sun's hot rays ;
Lav'd by a dashing torrent, that the stones
That stay'd its course lash'd with its angry foam,
And murmuring down, a thousand eddies form'd.
Nor sweeter music e'er could meet the ear 450
Than this ; to lull to sleep, or to abstract
The list'ner's soul from care and vulgar noise,
By melody of nature wild and strong.
Dark groves of cyprus and of ilex black,
Around, above the rocks, wide spread their shade ;
And all beneath, in thickest underwood,
Grew myrtle, laurestinus, and each shrub
Pleasant to eye and smell ; nor wanted there
Herbs aromatic, that the air perfum'd.
Boon Nature here in wild luxuriance smil'd ; 460
Nor far from hence trim art had gardens dress'd,
Terrace on terrace rais'd, where grassy turf,
Short shorn, invites the steps to cooling glades.
Olympus here was seen in marble fix'd,
With nymphs, and fauns, and all the fancied race
Of fairy land ; fountains and temples, that
Might back transport the classic mind to times
Of th' age Augustan ; nor could feudal war,

Nor ravages of Goths, root out the trace
Of Grecian art, implanted deep with all 470
The glorious triumphs of that age o'er taste
More barbarous, when in Italy were mix'd
The Gothic vastness with the Roman art.
Then the luxurious East her treasures pour'd
Into thy lap, oh, Florence ! whence arose
Thy frowning piles, huge quarries, on the ground ;
And vied thy merchants with proud northern kings.
Now wander'd here and there Hermione,
The goddess bright of this enchanted place :
Sometimes she cast her eyes on flow'ry banks, 480
Whose vivid colours might confuse the sight ;
Sometimes was lost in mazy paths, or in
The endless grottos, that had min'd the rocks,
Where murmuring streams and faint mysterious light,
Melted her soul to tenderness extreme ;
And, had not Buffa's wiles prevail'd, might have
Recall'd the holy convent's tranquil scenes.
For her love-darting eye the witch had fir'd ;
And when on Azzo it was bent, swift shot
Contagious poison, like a ray of light, 490
And lit anew the fire within his veins.
And now, to change the scene, with hounds and horn
Th' invisible enchantress strove to raise

His flagging spirits spent ; the chace, its joys,
Sweetest of toil, unfolds ; and scarce the morn
Had risen, when jovial spirit-rousing horns
'Woke many a smiling dame and gallant knight,
And bustling squire and page ; the pack that pent
In kennel, howl, are eager to commence
The sylvan war, and soon a gallant throng 500
Fills the great court ; the pawing steeds, and joke
And laugh that pass'd around, a merry din
Create : refresh'd by sleep, the dewy morn
Scenting, each jocund dame and sprightly nymph,
Bright glowing with delight, feel buoyant health
And spirits wild and strong. Hermione
Above the rest in grace and joy outshone ;
Fresh as the morning vapour, that springs up
In glen of wild Abruzzi, or the top
Of far Calabria's woody heights, e'er that 510
The sun hath scal'd the steep ascent of noon,
She sprang upon her lively steed. Azzo
In forest green array'd, with nodding plumes,
And baldrick buff, and silver bugle horn,
Close at her side with lowly pride attends.
Now clatt'ring hoofs, and eager murm'ring hounds,
With the full sounding horns, add music wild
To the gay scene ; for nought so gay is found,

So stirring as the chace; the mimicry
Of real war, the sylvan war delights. 520
In the dark cover plunge the deep-mouth'd pack,
Shaking the crystal drops from leafy bush,
That glisten in the wood; and sweetly sounds
The huntsman's cheer, that 'neath th' embow'ring trees
Now rings; yet sweeter still the tell-tale tongue
Of the first op'ning hound that hits the scent.
Now all the rest in eager chorus join,
With strong and varied note, that, swelling full,
Streams down the dale. Up from his lair then springs
The shaggy deer, his branching horns back thrown, 530
And swelling throat uprais'd, he rushes through
The crackling brake, and starts in joyous view
Of all, hounds, hunters, horses. Loud is strain'd
Each voice, and every nerve, for all are wild
And eager in the sport; away they fly,
The earth resounding to their rapid feet.
Uncheck'd by bit, the plunging, foaming steed,
Skims o'er the plain, or scales the mountain's side;
Or if restrain'd, he rolls and shakes his mane,
Then rushes down the slope; or, with a bound, 540
Contracting close his limbs, flings over brook
Or ditch, until exhausted, panting, sinking down,
With sweat, he totters on his weary limbs.

The uproar louder grows ; the stag at bay
Tosses his antlers high, and gores the hounds
That on him pour ; and now a circle wide
Is form'd of all the chace ; with cries of men
And hounds, and swell of horns, the air is rent.
He soon o'erwhelmed is by the whole chace ;
Hamstrung by some, by others then bestrode, 550
Held fast by ears ; then eager rushes in
The hunter bold, and straight with gleaming steel
Pierces his throat ; forth pours a dark red stream
Of smoking blood, lapp'd up by rav'nous hounds,
Who on the reeking entrails make their feast.
Home now they come, to feast, and quaff amain
The Tuscan grape ; in sumptuous bed again
To wrestle with soft sleep : the tide of blood,
That ebbs and flows quick from fatigue, with sleep
Will often struggle ere it doth subside ; 560
Then heavy sinks, and with a gentle dew
Imbues the limbs ; the playful heart then floats
In lighter atmosphere, and the quick pulse
With renovated vigour healthier beats.
Oh, rosy Health ! mother of sweet Content
And Joy ! without thee, sterile, blank, and dead,
Nature and Nature's kindest gifts appear.
Thou givest compensation due, for ills

That to the earth would press us down : mankind
We view as friends ; led by thy gracious hand, 570
Climate and season will be welcome found.

Devoutly we acknowledge all the gifts
Of God ; for we can then feel and receive
Them all with gratitude and pleasant song.

Now Azzo's arms hung idly on the wall,
A sight to grieve old knights ; their sick'ning hearts
Sunk low, for every breeze wafted a groan
From Padua. Each day new horrors bring
Of Eccelino's iron sway ; where'er
He stamp'd, torrents of blood gush'd out ; they sigh'd,
Because they knew a desert Italy
Would soon become, a wilderness was now.
The young knights all in thoughtless revelry
Were steep'd ; no more the manag'd war steed prick'd
His ears, or rais'd his crest to list the sound
Of martial trumpets ; the blythe chace alone
His mettle stirr'd ; his rider wore the night
In dance and revelry ; now minstrels struck
The harp, to sing of war, and troubadours
Exalted high the chivalry of France : 590
France, then the garden of romance, her knights
Of chivalry the flower ; nor was forgot
The fame of merry England ; stout her knights,

Though by her archers and her yeomen bold
Equall'd in field. Then were told tales of wars,
Of incantations, mystic giants, dwarfs,
Dragons, and ladies 'mur'd in castle walls,
Whose gates were guarded by some evil sprite :
Until the list'ning dames would hold their breath,
Their downcast eyes piteous protection ask. 600
Of Esté's house most skill'd in olden lore
Was his good squire, Sebastiano nam'd ;
Bred in Bologna, he had travell'd much ;
Oft had been toss'd on Ocean ; nor unskill'd
Was he in wily arts that foes beguile ;
Could penetrate, disguis'd, their camp ; and knew
To steal, with steps unseen, on midnight watch ;
And more, each dark intrigue of court or love
He knew, and seldom fail'd a lady's heart.
But light as air his passion was, and he 610
Th' inconstant aye was nam'd ; nor less fair dames
Were with his witchery pleas'd ; for he the craft
Possess'd of a bewitching tongue, the sure
Conductor of Love's lightning ; and when'er
He saw in hall the mirth begin to flag,
A tale of olden time he well could tell,
That might awake attention, and beguile
The heavy hours away : thus would he say.

“ Erewhile in Spain, where vast Alhambra spreads
His lion court, when Moorish monarchs ceas’d 620
To reign, a youthful knight beheld a nun
At convent grate ; in beauteous mould was cast
Her Andalusian form ; th’ Hesperian fields
Teem with light nymphs, that graceful glide along,
With eyes like stars, that twinkle through the veil
Of night ; so sparkled ’neath her coif, the eyes
Of the Grenada nun, that lit a flame
Within this true knight’s breast, who now was toss’d
By passion strong, that would not let him rest ;
And to and fro he pac’d, with hurried step, 630
Before the convent gate : and straight would stop,
And ever and anon, with anxious gaze,
His eyes would cast upon the casement barr’d,
To catch (if haply he might catch) a glimpse
Of her fair form, as quick it flitted past ;
And this achiev’d, no ease to his sick soul
Could bring, but rather increase of his cares.
Unsatisfied desires, bewilder’d days,
And restless dreaming nights, were still his fare ;
For he entangled was in torturing toils 640
Of craving, unfed love : yet hope, the last
Sad refuge of the wretch, flatter’d his breast,
Tho’ still ’twas faint and chill—but to my tale :

One happy day, at twilight, as he pass'd,
Musing in wonted mood, a fair white hand
Beckon'd him from that casement; quick each sense
Was strain'd to catch these accents as they fell—
'When midnight bell hath toll'd, then boldly scale
The garden wall.' Courage now brac'd his heart;
No thought of captive chains, or dungeon dank, 650
Or death on scaffold, or long banishment,
Or flight to Afric's sandy plains, with Moors
To bide, e'er cross'd his heated brain; rather
The vict'ry o'er a sainted maid immur'd.
Oh, thought of vict'ry! thought divine, thou driv'st
To shades below, far from our glowing sight,
The image of grim death, and woe, and sin;
For these, by thee, are swallow'd and absorb'd,
Or so gloss'd o'er as still to be unseen.
So felt the knight, when struck the midnight hour. 660
With ladder then he scales the wall, to feel
The light and shade of human life, or death,
Or love; these of our being are the great lights
And shades; glorious the moment, when between
These two we stand, awaiting life or death.
As goss-hawk, he on high beheld his prey,
And in a moment, panting, slid along
The ladder's shafts. The moonbeams danc'd upon

The nun, whose form, though hid by veil, and coif
And scapular, graceful now appear'd, 670
As poplar tree that waves in every breeze.
The knight quick clasp'd her to his swelling heart,
With burning kisses parch'd her balmy lips,
That, fragrant, like the twilight morn of spring,
Op'ning earth's genial pores, exhales all life ;
So from her lips he did her life exhale.
She stood entranc'd, unconscious of her being,
Her purpose lost, by this rude shock o'erwhelm'd.
He would have join'd his soul to her's, as their
Two forms were thus entwin'd. Soon as his fire 680
Was slack'd, escap'd she from his glowing grasp,
Gasping awhile for breath ; with chang'd look then
She ask'd, ' Oh, knight, safely can I rely
Upon thy courage, else to-morrow's sun
May see me die, and thy own life, perhaps,
In saving mine be lost ? if courage now
Warm thy firm heart, then follow me.' This said,
She seiz'd his hand ; the touch electric was,
That would have led him to the shades below.
She led him through a maze of shady walks, 690
Orange and lemon trees thick set ; the dark
And spiral cyprus, guardian of the tomb,
Embow'r'd their way, impervious to the beams

Of the faint silv'ry moon, until they came
To a low arch, grown o'er by mantling shrubs ;
Strong-scented jasmin, and the berries red
Of Pyreanthus, mixt with straggling briar,
And honeysuckle, hid the Moorish walls.
Low down they stoop'd to pass the wicket gate,
Silent ascended then the moss-grown stair ; 700
Arriving, breathless soon, at her cell door,
Slowly she push'd it in, and gave to view
A rude carv'd iron lamp, that glimmer'd near
The altar that her crucifix sustain'd ;
Each side of which two vases of fresh flow'rs
Were set. Breathless and tiptoe then the nun,
Her finger laid across her lips in sign
Of silence, slow advanc'd ; as slowly he
Follow'd to where she stood, and pointed to
Her pallet bed ; he look'd, and horror thrill'd 710
His veins ; cold drops of sweat from his pale front
Pour'd fast ; his knees no longer gave support.
A ghastly corse he there beheld ; a corse,
Clad in Religion's sacred garb, lay stretch'd
Upon the bed : of his vain impious love
The altar, that erewhile his fancy rais'd ;
Yet now his vap'ring courage fled, and he
Who distant death defy'd, its image near,

Felt a cold tremor shake his coward limbs.
White as his cowl was the dead monk's broad brow, 720
Bushy and black his beard ; in vigour he
Of manhood full had died. A dreadful pause
Ensued ; but when the mystery the knight
Would know, the nun would cross her lips, ' Away,
Away,' would say, ' come bear the corse away.'
The sullen knight obey'd the stern behest ;
With wary steps he bore the corse away,
O'er his broad shoulders thrown. The nun then took
Her lamp, to light his tott'ring footsteps down
The narrow stairs ; silent they glided through 730
The garden's gloom ; safe at the ladder's foot
Arriv'd, the knight, recov'ring quick his breath,
Mounted with his dread load ; for, cas'd in mail
Complete, oft had he scal'd the hostile breach
Through show'rs of arrows ; then from the high wall
He threw the corse into the lonely street.
As a true knight the service he perform'd,
For knights are bound by honour to obey
Each woman's call ; homeward he dragg'd his steps,
Sullen and sad, nor would he deign to look 740
Back on the nun, nor she on him ; her work
Was done, in darkest mystery involv'd."
Thus, in such pleasant idle talk, the hours

Unheeded flew: and, in their pleasant bow'rs,
Knights, dames, and merry squires, revell'd in joy.

Azzo was lost to duty and to fame,
Sunk in Hermione's voluptuous arms;
Her swelling breast his pillow was, on which
He laid his burning cheek; his senses steep'd
In pleasure, as he bask'd in her sweet smile, 750
That, like mild Cynthia's silver beams, could calm
His hot soul's fire, and seal his closing eye
In dizzy rapt'rous doze; yet oft the thought,
Unbidden, on his pleasures would intrude;
The thought that her brave father's death as yet
Was unaveng'd; Rainero's too; nor less
He thought of Leonora, and her babes;
The mother wand'ring with her famish'd brood,
Whom hunger hourly hasten'd to their doom,
Marking the savage ban; the rights deny'd 760
Of sepulture, except within the maw
Of vulture; no one dar'd to contravene
The tyrant's ban, or bread or shelter give.
Some pitying hand alone a stone would lay
On each that fell, that so these stones one day
Might rise in judgment 'gainst the tyrant's house.
The last poor babe that died, its frantic dam
Press'd closely to her throbbing breast, and thus

Let slip its glimpse of suff'ring life ; madness
Then kindly came, and 'reft her of her wits. 770
Three days and nights her howlings, deep and long,
From the dark woods were heard ; some thought she was
A she wolf, of her young bereav'd ; her hair
And clothes she tore ; and then her teeth would meet
In her starv'd flesh, nor blood could draw ; she bay'd,
With hideous yell, the moon awhile, then died,
And her much injur'd spirit to Heav'n's high courts,
To join her injur'd lord, rejoicing flew.
Though thoughts like these would oft intrude by fits,
Yet shame, and conscience' stings, but rarely felt, 780
And transient only, flew through Azzo's breast.
The rosy morn was duly usher'd in
By hound and horn ; revel and feast the night
Consum'd. Hermione, each day that pass'd,
Grew more luxurious ; oft when Phœbus dipp'd
His golden chariot in the western sea,
And the chaste moon arose, whose silver beams
Innoxious play, then she would bend her steps
To Dian's bath, form'd in the rocky glen.
On one side rush the waters, and their spray 790
Throw 'gainst the rock ; then opens there a grot
Upon the pool, whose pavement, richly wrought
Of tessellated stones, more beauteous is

Than beds of flow'rs ; and from the grotto cool
A flight of marble steps lead to a bath.
Around, in animated marble carv'd,
Diana, with her nymphs, is seen ; and there
Acteon chas'd by his own hounds, that gives
Warning to eyes profane ne'er to invade
This sanctuary. Of white Carrara was 800
The floor, seen through the pure translucent wave ;
Here myrtle grew, and sacred laurel screen'd
The spot. One sultry night the spangled arch
Of Heav'n was of a darker, deeper blue ;
The moon gleam'd bright with her full face, and seem'd
Rejoicing in her orb ; the fire-flies' light
In mid air sparkled ; they the brilliant gems
Of animated nature, that adorn
Night's earthly vesture. Such the hour, the time,
Hermione now chose to seek the bath, 810
Attended by her two most favour'd nymphs,
Lucinda, Viola ; descending now
With cautious step the grot, they enter straight ;
Loosens Hermione her radiant zone,
And soon the busy damsels her despoil
Of those rich robes that half conceal'd her form ;
That form that Phidias' chisel had not scorn'd,
To grace the temple of the Paphian queen.

Her golden hair in azure net is bound ;
Her nymphs, alike unrob'd, follow her steps ; 820
The lovely three issue from out the grot,
Back cowering, startled, and ashamed, e'en at
The cold chaste moon's modest unscorching look.
Hermione stretch'd out her ivory foot,
Then drew it back when she the chilness felt ;
With laugh and joke they stand, and half afraid,
Hang o'er the brink, then hand in hand the three
Plunge headlong in the limpid element,
A lucid garment form'd, through which they seem'd
More fair e'en than the floor on which they stood. 830
A thousand frolics the gay laughing nymphs
Perform ; they dive, and rise, and plunge, and dart,
Nor sportive dolphins e'er more gamesome were ;
And sometimes wanton on the surface float
Their forms ; then turn and sudden disappear.
The moon alone a conscious witness is
Of their wild gambols : Nature, mistress sole
Of these their revels ; she a tumult rais'd
In their young blood, which many an image wild
To giddy fancy gave, and forms grotesque ; 840
So did warm Venus Dian's hour usurp.
Their shadowy forms arise from 'neath the wave
To the warm air ; a ruddy glow o'erspreads

Their milk-white forms, trickling adown with drops;
Then by this crystal mirror they are dress'd.
Nymph of the grot Hermione appears,
Envelop'd soon beneath her flowing robes;
But for her tighten'd zone her form were lost,
For it disclos'd her small round breasts and shape
Out-swelling, broad, and full; still 'neath the folds 850
Of her loose dress her limbs do freely move,
And grace appears in every shadow that
They cast: broad lights and shades to beauty are
Allied, for Nature teaches grace divine.
Hail, heavenly grace! by Nature taught, that winds
Round woman's gentle form, and guides her steps;
Her glowing passion, close-pent and subdued,
Lies in her inmost breast, panting to flee,
But still restrain'd, grace to her form doth give,
And magic charms that Paradise restore, 860
Man's will subdues, that haughty will that all
Can conquer, tame, is tam'd and led by thee!
Such grace the fountain is of human joy;
Still on we drink, ne'er can it slake our thirst
Insatiate, ne'er assuage its hot desires.

Azzo now wander'd forth Hermione
To seek: he found her not: still searching on
He went, strolling with blithesome step among

Th' embow'ring trees, and ponder'd on his love.
 In a dark grove, 'midst oaks primeval, that 870
 Resembled columns of some lofty dome,
 Whose leafy windows shut not out the rays
 Of the clear moon, Azzo beheld the form
 Of one, who by her port might seem to sway
 A sceptre, so majestic was her step.
 He felt the influence of the shadowy form
 As it approach'd; for to the eye she seem'd
 A human being; but his thrilling frame
 A spirit's presence spoke; for spirits can,
 Though incorporeal, by our corp'ral sense 880
 Be known, and will the senses then o'erwhelm:
 For, ever and anon, they flit abroad
 To rouse mankind, and bid us catch a glimpse
 Of th' immaterial world beyond our ken.
 From realms beyond the grave Leonora
 Came to revisit earth, and Heav'n decreed
 That she should solace find, in urging Est'
 On her ferocious foe: thus Heav'n will send
 Her bolts upon the earth, and manifest
 Just retribution, and division clear 890
 Of virtue and of crime. When Azzo saw
 Her shade, he started back, pale and aghast;
 His hoarse voice stuck in his distended throat,

And tremor seiz'd his limbs ; bath'd in cold dew,
He gaz'd on graves that seem'd to yawn before
His steps ; but, with his blood re-ent'ring all
His veins, his voice return'd ; thus then he spake :
“ Who art thou, that the grave's voracious jaws
Doth vomit up, to wander here in Love's
Delightful haunts, and chill our joyous blood, 900
And Nature's fair economy reverse ?
Speak, awful shade ! for on thy gracious brow
Deep sorrow sits, that doth betray a heart
Gnaw'd by the cankerworm of grief, that must
The deepest anguish of our lives transcend ;
Whence art thou ? Not from Hell thy looks bespeak ;
For no distortion visible in all
Thy limbs appears ; say from what middle place
Hast thou escap'd, oh, venerable shade ?
Speak, though thou crack my ears, and freeze my soul,
With thy dread voice, awful to mortal man ! 911
Speak, though thou dost unfold some horrid tale,
That my bewilder'd wits to madness turn !
Thou look'st to chide me with those eyes of thine ;
Those eyes that pierce my inmost breast, that shrinks
To stand before thy form immortal ; say,
Art thou a messenger of good or ill ?
Thy mien bespeaks thee kind ; say, then, for I

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Am dazzled by the rays that now are shed
By thy effulgence !” To him then the shade 920
Did answer make, in low sepulchral tone :
“ Behold, before thee Leonora stands !
Weak mortal, sport of influences that
Are infinite, if pensive sorrow sits
Upon my brow, it is because I now
Revisit earth ; nor e’er was I exempt
From influences opposite. I fell
The victim of the worst, nor left behind
Aught that could e’er endear life’s fleeting joys.
And now in empyrean light I live, 930
Where grief abides not, and of suff’rings past
Reap the all righteous meed. Hear then, oh Est’,
My mission ; ’tis to thee I come ; for thee
I raise my warning voice : know then (and may
This knowledge profit thee), know that each step
Thou tak’st is now beset ; encompass’d thou
With subtle wiles of Hell ; what to thee seems
Both good and fair, is ill and foul, be sure,
And round thy sight visions untrue do flit.
Stumbling thou go’st, drawn by the magnet that 940
Invisible is held in hands of Fate.
A beacon light to glory’s path I come,
To point the way that thou hast lost ; break thou

The trammels that enchain thee, and defy
This son of Hell, whose wiles now hold thee fast.
Join in the holy league that soon will rise
In arms against him ; rouse the warrior's soul
Within thee, and the issue of the fight
Fear not ; thy cause is good ; and now farewell !"
She said, and, swift as meteor through the sky, 950
Aslant she flew athwart the still night air ;
Rapid as rocket rushing with a hiss,
She cleaves the sky ; sparks of eternal fire
Mark'd her bright path, too bright for mortal eyes
To trace ; and, as she rose to view, she seem'd
The star of eve, so dight with holy light,
Harmless and palpable but to the eye.

BOOK IV.

OH ! for that voice that sang in strains divine
The fall of Zion, tun'd to that sweet harp
That on thy willows hung, oh, Babylon !
Or rather the mysterious notes, that down
The palmy vale of Kedron float ('tis said),
And to sweet sleep the midnight vigils lull
Of pilgrims, whom their piety has led
To shrines of holy light ; whose weary feet
Have trac'd their way through burning sands, or torn
By flinty rocks ; such aid my Muse invokes, 10
To tell how then began the mighty war,
To rescue Italy from bloody fangs
That held her fast ; more now with me consorts
The mystic harp, for now of mystic things
I sing. Who can believe blind man doth guide
His steps through devious paths diverging e'er?
Or that his frail and foolish will doth move
Th' eternal tide, that in th' intelligence

Supreme of God doth ebb and flow ; to whom
All space and time is null and void ; who is, 20
And was, and will be ; formless, who all form ;
Lifeless, who is all life ; and, motionless,
All motion is ; for motion, form, and life
All emanate from God ; he increate ;
Thence not to be conceiv'd : for beings create,
These created beings can alone conceive.
And shal man then presume to turn the drift
Of things that have from dark eternity
E'er roll'd ? No : for mysterious influence
Governs each turn we take, God over all. 30
Within his scope is jarring influence,
That alway does impenetrable seem
To our weak mortal eyes, that sealed are.
Aid me, ye Prophets ! who the middle way
Have held 'twixt earth and sky ; interpret ye
What is of Heav'n the will, to us thus dark,
Unknown ; why tyrants rule with iron rod,
And then are hurled down ; why man is tame
As is the sheep that licks the slayer's hand ;
Then fierce as rav'ning wolves will revel deep 40
In blood ; when, screaming loud, wild anarchy,
Like famish'd vultures, soaring o'er the march
Of armies, with broad wing and carcass light,

And talons strong, and hungry beak, to rive
The dying breast, breaking the casket up
That holds the precious gem of life? If 'tis
Eternally ordain'd, tell me, oh Muse!
That sung God's sacred song, how that his lov'd
And chosen people out of bondage came;
Tell me if anarchy of tyranny 50
The sole cure is? When Hell's black jaws are op'd,
Belching sulphureous fire and smoke to blight
The earth, then Hell-born tyranny takes root;
Nor oft uprooted can it be, be sure,
Save by the stronger blasts of anarchy,
Which all uproots; riv'n cities, with a crash
Hideous and 'whelming, then come tumbling down:
Justice is oft 'neath lawless tumult hid:
That flame that in our hearts doth burn, and them
Lights up. The light of God shines in our hearts, 60
Whenever we that light invoke sincere.
Say, where the holy flame burns purest in
The purest heart, when prostrate the appeal
Is through the sword to high Heav'n made! To God
Th' appeal, either in justice to live on,
Or stand before him. Dread appeal! that leads
To such sublime devotion; that would found
On earth th' empire of justice and of right.

This ever has been God's decree, unchang'd,
Eternal ever will it be ; for God 70
Is just, although unknown to us his ways ;
How that he compasseth right, that final
Is ; and if wrong exists, 'tis but to prove
Man's courage high, and call him forth to stand
Undaunted in the bloody field, and see
On either hand the portals open wide
Of justice, or a glorious tomb. Oh, great
And mighty destiny of man, that thus can be
Doubly immortal ; here, on earth, in fame
Immortal, and immortal there, above ; 80
With deathless laurel here, and glory there.
This is your meed, oh, Patriots ! ye, who dare
For freedom die ; arise ! from ruin save
Fair virtue's name, and boldly stem the tide
Of discord fell, of anarchy, and war.
For, if man perish then, his spirit twice
Will live, transfused wide, below, above,
Immortal ; and his deeds heroic shall
Be tun'd to many a celestial harp
Of melody divine, that never dies. 90
Thus where Hydaspes laves the soil adust,
Flowing the Indus to embrace ; or where
Ganges his wave majestic rolls along,

(Lord of eleven tributary streams),
His mighty tide to swell, in tangled copse
Or jungle deep, the brinded tiger creeps
With ears erect, and fiery eyes, that glare,
And, like the glowworms, light the darkest night.
Oft hath the Indian swain his slaughter'd flocks
Track'd to the robber's lair, where couch'd he lies 100
In fancied safety, till arous'd at length
By oft repeated injuries, the swains
Unite in common cause ; eager are all
To gain the shaggy spoils : then javelin, spear,
Are all prepar'd, and winged arrows shot
By crooked bows of horn of buffaloe.
The hunters now their moving fortress mount,
Giant of brutes, with instinct half of man !
The white tusk'd elephant, whose massy limbs
Four moving pillars seem, kindred in sense, 110
Obeys he then the will of man, but not
By fear or force, but glorying in the strife.
The crackling jungle breaks beneath his tread ;
The royal beast with coat of various hues,
Tawny and black harmoniously blent,
Lashing his sides, springs up, then down again
Crouching, he waits to take his bounding leap,
Springs he three lengths or more, with hideous yell ;

Nor war more terrible could e'er assail
The ears of man or beast ; and from the neck 120
Of the huge elephant in rage he tears
His guide ; th' insulted elephant aloft
Tosses the brindled breast, and under foot
Tramples his spotted foe : now rushes forth
His mate ; the furious din arises loud,
And arrows fly, and javelins sing in air.
Beset, encompass'd, soon she sinks in blood,
And gasping, rolling, bites the ground and dies.
Thus Italy arose her beast of prey
To chase ; from town to town, with busy hum, 130
The murmur ran ; for Eccelino came
From his den, furious as the hungry wolf,
That 'scap'd from frozen mountains, gallops wild
Across th' affrighted plain ; dismal and gaunt,
With lank and famish'd sides, and savage eye,
He leaps in every fold ; his empty maw
Seeking to fill, his thirst to quench in blood.
Thus Eccelino now had widely spread
Dismay throughout the Patriot ranks, to make
A dubious war more doubtful still. " Oh for 140
A David now !" the people cried ; for kings
Their daughters would not scorn to match with him,
Who would have slain this fierce Goliath, he

Who Heav'n and Earth defied ; one foot in Hell,
The other stamping on the earth, with eyes
Impiously braving the Almighty throne.
Thus Eccelino stood, and frown'd around
Defiance, he trusting in the real strength
Of discipline and hosts in battle prov'd ;
War to his host but pastime was, and high 150
Disdain a second courage prov'd to men,
Who liv'd to revel in the lust of rule.

“ To arms ! ” the fearful plains exclaim'd. “ To arms ! ”
The haughty mountains now replied, with voice
That echo'd to the torrents' roar ; their caps
Burghers threw up in air, with shouts that deep
Responded to the war-cry in their streets.

Now the full organ's swell to Heav'n arose,
Freighted with pious vows of age and youth ;
The mercy of the God of battle they 160
Implore. “ To arms ! to arms ! ” the constant cry
That Heav'n's high throne assails, whene'er the sons
Of Freedom by Oppression are borne down.
'Tis the appeal to God to vindicate
His charter giv'n to man ; for Liberty
His charter is ; and, like the air we breathe,
Without it, morally, we sink and die.
The cry of war pierc'd Azzo's sluggish ears,

And in his slumb'ring breast a new born flame
Awoke, that burnt more fierce than e'en his love ; 170
Or haply rather love might fan the flame,
For love and fame are oft allied : he rose,
And to the hall his knights and followers call'd,
And in these war-inspiring words began :
“ Barons and knights, soldiers, inur'd to war,
No more your idle arms shall useless hang
Upon the walls ; but soon, like meteors, gleam
Through clouds of rolling dust, and mark the road
To victory or death (then may they deck
Your glorious tombs). The chafing war-steeds paw
And waste their courage in the stall ; the trump 181
Soon shall bid swell their throbbing veins : mount, mount,
For Italy and Freedom ! Such shall be
The watchword. To Bologna now I go
To meet the holy League, their high resolves
To learn. Oh, Mary ! arm my hand, and swell
My heart to pluck the blood-stain'd diadem
From the fell tyrant's brow : unfurl thy flag,
Oh, Holy Church ! o'er my devoted head.
My trust's in thee ; wash free my soul from sin : 190
The champion I of thee and Liberty.
Come on then, knights ; soldiers should ever be
Prepar'd alike for death or life, for both

Already in the scales of fate are weigh'd."
From ev'ry scabbard leap'd each flaming brand ;
Tumultuous voices shouted the war-cry,
" Mount, mount, for Italy and Liberty !"
Then every knee was bent ; in tone of voice
Subdu'd, " Hail, Mary, blessed Mary, hail !"
In solemn murmur rose ; and rising all 200
To chapel went : damsels and dames all veil'd
Were mix'd with hardy knights, whose armour bright
Reflected each fair face and tearful eye.
On every lady's brow sat solemn grief,
And anguish, gnawing at each heart, sought vent
At the full eye, and heaving sobs were mix'd
With pray'rs, and every secret of each heart
Was open laid before th' Almighty Throne.
Stern purpose mark'd the visage of each knight,
And knit the brow of age ; whilst sparkling eyes, 210
And haughty looks spoke on the brow of youths,
Who, restless, hasty, vain, irascible,
Panted to plunge into the foaming tide.
Now peal'd the swelling organ loud and full ;
Delicious melody, that to high Heav'n
Can raise the supplicating soul, and bid
It rise from earth on wings of harmony.
With solemn mien the priests the awful rites

Perform ; their vesture splendid, as well might
Become the servants of the Church ; around 220
Thick clouds of incense roll : the fragrant smoke
Ascends the dome ; its aromatic smell
Each nostril fills, as Araby pours forth
Her treasures, seas'ning thus the holy rite.
Now the full chorus swells in joyous quire,
And voices sweetly hymn their Maker's praise ;
But soon the notes of joy are check'd ; the bell
Sounds from the altar's foot ; the priest breathes low
The deep and silent pray'r ; tinkles again
The bell ; droops every head upon each breast, 230
Flutter'd with hope and shame ; and, whilst the priest
Raises aloft the Holy Host, each heart
Trembling, aghast, a present deity,
That probes each secret of the conscience, feels.
In his own heart th' assassin feels the stroke
Of his own knife, whilst the deep blush of shame
Speaks on his cheek ; now malice, broken vows,
Apostacy and perj'ry, feel the pangs
Of deep remorse, as speaks the still small voice
Within their breasts, ordain'd by God to be 240
The scourge of crimes, that earthly justice 'scape.
Beauty and valour there devoutly join
In prayer : both prostrate lie before their God ;

Beauty and valour, pow'r's first elements,
Are powerless here ; manhood's stern eye is tam'd,
And youth's proud brow forgets its glance of scorn.
Adown Hermione's fair cheek the tear
Of penitence is trickling, and the charm
Is broke that Azzo's soul to her's had bound.
She sees long years of war, and blazing towns 250
Quench'd by blood alone ; and patriots fierce
Aspiring each for rule ; names blotted out,
And families extinct ; and, in their place,
Soldiers ennobled by the sword, that shine
Suns of a day, then set in endless night.
But her wild scatter'd thoughts were now condens'd,
When in her holy trance she thought she saw
Esté transfigur'd in the morning star.
Glorious shall rise that morning star, and wake
Italia, slumb'ring in her chains, and it 260
Shall shine o'er Eccelino's grave ; ages
Shall roll o'er ages, and again shall shine
That star, and on th' eternal city shed
Its holy light, such liberty diffuse
As tyrants shall strike blind, or tempt them on
To an inglorious tomb : again shall wave
The banner of the Church, and youth shall be
To virtue and to chivalry high train'd.

Then far and wide the holy flame shall rage ;
Asunder burst the fetters of mankind, 270
And loosen all the base, ignoble bonds
Of selfish civil rule, unworthy all
Of those ethereal souls, that nought can quell,
The worshippers devout of liberty.

Such were the visions now whose radiant hues
Inflated her warm heart ; her new alarms
Were lost amid the brilliant rays of hope.

The trumpet sounds to horse : Est' and his knights
All mount ; their pennons stream ; in bright array
March the gay squadrons 'neath the noon-day beams.
Around are clasping hands, and weeping eyes, 281
And the sharp shudder of uncertain fate,
Until the winding columns far are lost.

The Lombard league assembled were ; each town
Its legate sent the Guelphic int'rest to
Sustain ; for every town divided was
By factions fierce and strong, on ruin bent
Of Church, or State, of Guelph, or Ghibelin.
But Eccelino viewing calm the storm,

That streak'd the ruddy sky pregnant with wind 290
That to an hurricane would rise, had call'd
Th' Emperor down with his fierce northern host ;
Nor thought that his ally could fix his seat

In Italy, though there he sought to bind
His haughty brow with the stern iron crown.
Ob, Italy ! thy fierce foes oft have worn
That crown ! Who shall now rise to tear it off
Their brow ? Arm ! arm thy hands with kindred steel !
Repel the northern host that, like its blast,
Chills thy quick flowing blood, and nips the bud 300
Of thy fair fame ; shrinks all thy nerves, and sheds
A baleful sickness round. Meantime the league
Began, with high debate, and jarring views
Marr'd their resolves. Not so the tyrant ; he
Brooding now sat to make fate pregnant then
Upon the vulture's nest, wherein all guile
Was hatch'd : his piercing eye saw through the mists
That o'er the future hung, and in the deep
Recesses of his heart he thought he found
The key of fate : omniscient though his spells, 310
He knew the strength or weakness of each host.
In him was center'd unity ; for none
To council call'd he ; but from his own mouth
Issu'd his orders forth ; and, like the high
Decrees of fate, they fell, striking aghast
Both friend and foe, and with'ring by their force,
Resistance scorn'd. Silent his army lay
And secret, like the thunder cloud prepar'd

To burst, and 'whelm his foes. In every town
His secret party work'd; each night their blades 320
Unsheathe'd beneath their pillows lay: within
The precincts of his dreaded rule pale fear
Stalk'd day and night, and his fell instruments
Were still more dreaded than himself. Prisons
Were gorg'd, and frequently did vomit blood,
That drench'd the streets. Still care sat on his brows:
His fiery soul swell'd out his pigmy form,
And through his eye-balls glar'd in such a guise,
That made all quake with fear: his action firm
And haughty was; his step declar'd him born 330
For deeds of arms; in all his looks stern power
Appear'd; in every gesture high command.
Now in Verona's castle, girt with ranks
Of knights and barons bold, the tyrant sat;
Pensive he sat, reclin'd in chair of state,
Whose crimson tap'stry gave a deeper cast
To his pale furrow'd brow; his nether lip
He bit, when dark presentiments shot quick
Athwart his brain; but when bright views he caught
Of vengeance or success, he started up, 340
His dagger drew, and brandish'd it aloft,
Stamping his foot: before him quickly stood
Some trusty squire or knight, whose war-worn locks

More by fatigue than age were blanch'd ; the words
That pass'd were few, well chos'n, and sprung from deep
And patient thought ; from mouth to mouth then ran
The rapid orders, each a destiny !
Deep ponder'd Eccelino as he sat,
And these his thoughts. " Well may I count, I ween,
On my brave host : for skill and courage none 350
With them can e'er compare ; but sure with them
Alone I ne'er can strive against this storm
That gathers round me. Frederick must I watch
With cautious eye ; and he our common hate
Shall bear, and be to me an useful foil.
Our mutual sins shall on his head be laid,
That on him sudden may I turn, if he
Too strong should prove ; the post of honour shall
He have, as well becomes an Emperor.
To every onslaught I will urge him on ; 360
In sacking towns increase the public hate ;
Enervate thus in the licentious war
His troops' good order ; whilst, pre-eminent
In discipline, by contrast mine shall shine.
But should he, as the forest oak o'ertops
The rugged thorn, o'er-shadow me, the bowl
And dagger (last resource of all who dare
Upon ambition's troubled sea embark !)

Of him shall rid me. But no more ; there reigns
Another pow'r more subtle far than his : 370
That pow'r is Christ's ; priests dream the keys of Heav'n
He holds, and prate of happiness to come :
Each soul delude with mystic cant, so strong
Implanted in each breast, that bids them arm
And die like martyrs in the Church's cause.
Their blood that's spilt but fructifies the earth,
So that a crop of treason ever springs ;
And I, the reaper, break my weary back
With heavy harvest toils, that now draw drops
Of sweat from my wrung brow. If then the Church
The keys of Heav'n doth hold, I hold the keys 381
Of Hell, and will its fellest fiends unleash !
Havoc then reign ! and let me wade through gore
To pow'r unlimited, and let him wear
The bauble of a crown, and wear the thorns
That do within its golden circlet spring.
Of this be sure ; as doth the bristly boar
Root up the vineyard's pride, e'en so will I
Root out the hated Guelphs from this fair soil.
Down then shall fall the Church, and in her stead 390
My dread father's mighty spirit then shall reign,
Unbounded here on earth, and ruthless all,
As he doth reign in Hell ; darkness shall reign

Then shall be seen th' infernal flame that gleams
In me: but first, oh, Demon! with thy wiles
Aid me, for sooth thy cause and mine are one."
Thus ponder'd he, then sudden starting up
He stamp'd his foot, and to his presence call'd
The Nuncio of the Pope; before him straight
The Nuncio stood, a venerable priest. 400
Well skill'd was he to read the human heart;
And at his girdle hung the key that could
Unlock all hopes and fears; calm was his eye
That deep could penetrate: if then a man
Had Eccelino been, he could have read
His soul; but he half man half demon was:
No human pow'r could him divine, nor yet
Aught human him o'erthrow, until his hour
Was struck, struck by the iron hand of fate.
Mute stood the priest, like the keen hound at fault
That snuffs the breeze; yet felt he the keen glance
Of Eccelino's eye; the holy cross
He sign'd upon his breast, a safeguard sure
'Gainst the dark pow'rs in peril's hour to be.
Man's instinct stronger than his reason is;
In danger then to instinct should he cling,
Invoking his good genius, who at hand
Is ever found to be; for no man's heels

His good and evil genius both do tread,
And each doth pull him to the right or left. 420
Sometimes in dreams our instinct works, and is
With prescience gifted ; then, if this be true,
Fate governs our free will ; what share fate has
In that free will we cannot tell, but still
In darkness must remain confounded quite.
With gracious smile the hypocrite profound
The Nuncio greeted (for hypocrisy
Is ever wont in smiles to clothe herself),
And humbly bending low, thus did he speak :
“ A glimmering faint of mild and heav’nly light 430
Warms now my chill breast ; I, a sinner vile,
Seek to be shriv’n, and kiss the holy feet
Of th’ apostolic father, pardon crave
Of him for my deep crimes ; for whatsoe’er
These are his holy office ne’er by me
Has been denied ; nor rebel have I been,
But a sad sinner, whose dark soul, once sear’d
With crimes of deepest, deadliest die, now pants
To free itself from the dark prison house
Of sin ; oh, give it wings, that, eagle like, 440
High it may soar, to gaze on that bright light
That from the pure empyrean darts its rays ;
Blest heavenly light that th’ inward soul alone

Can see and feel, unseen by eyes of flesh !
Thus on my knees to thee, with contrite heart,
I fall ; oh, father, shrive a wretched man,
Who sees beneath his feet Hell's yawning gates !"
Then, shudd'ring, on his bended knees he fell.
The lie had well nigh chok'd him, but Hell's pow'r
Was strong within him, and he gulp'd it down. 450
But still it left behind a vacant stare,
Ideas confus'd, that utt'rance sought in vain
In speech. With cold contempt the holy man
The hypocrite's confession heard, and soon
His presence left with few and formal words.
Upsprung the tyrant quick ; a glow of rage
Chas'd his dark shame away ; pale rage return'd ;
Ghastly his baleful eyes gleam'd with Hell's flames
Around, and mutt'ring curses through his lips,
Quiv'ring and bleach'd, he smote his breast and clench'd
His fist, and to destruction deep he vow'd 461
The Church, with curses from his boiling soul
That bubbled up : again he stamp'd his foot,
And passion quiv'ring sat upon his lip,
And strongly heav'd his bursting heart ; each turn
He took he wav'd his dagger up and down,
Mutt'ring his execrations ; each deep curse
Seem'd fraught with venom that the earth's pure air

Polluted ; and if curses could have kill'd,
'Then sated would have been his dark revenge. 470
Otone Volpe now before him stood ;
Devoted he to Eccelino was ;
Of wary council and of sure dispatch,
He knew the secrets of his master's rule.
Silent, he heard all ; e'en the whispers low
Of winds to his quick ear could tidings bring,
Which well he judg'd of ; false from true he knew
(This the great secret and unerring mark
Of rule, or in the council or the field).
Volpe was quick and sure ; he held the match 480
That was to spring the mine upon the Guelphs.
Soon as the throes of his tempestuous breast
Had ceas'd, at length thus Eccelino spoke ;
“ At Parma, 'tis our will, the fire burst forth,
That Italy shall scorch : Volpe attend ;
That spot is central, and upon that point
My armies now shall move ; the Lombard thus
Dissev'ring from the rugged Romangnol.
Azzo is at Bologna, and the League
In idle talk and feuds consume the time. 490
Let us dispatch, and fly to Parma thou ;
There light the flame, that soon to us shall blaze
A beacon star ; for there the Ghibellins

The Guelphs out-number; Barbarossa's son
Advances with his mighty force: he soon
Vincenza shall assault; then enter we
Padua together; there our party reign;
The Guelphs there long have fed the carrion crow,
Or the deep soil manur'd; to Parma thou,
And let the welkin blaze with fiery sparks, 500
And scream of dire despair be music to
Thine ears; from thence shall spread this bloody war!"

Glorious and calm the sun had set, and shed
O'er Parma's dome and the rich country round,
In ruby streaks of light, his last farewell;
And as he sank on his Hesperian couch,
Which Tethys had on her dark bosom laid,
The colour'd clouds, with variegated hues,
Offspring of his full radiance, hung awhile
In brightest canopy, and mark'd the spot. 510
On which he sank to rest, on western wave
Pillow'd, beyond the far Iberian shore.
In Parma's walls no sound, but all was hush'd
In still repose; light slumbers wafted joy.
Now the coy maid, courageous in her sleep,
Around her fancied swain her wanton arms
Would throw; then, half awaking, start, and turn,
And dream of some love potion, or of snares

Such as a fortune-telling dame will oft
Advise ; gold chains, and philtres magical, 520
With rings, and all the pretty springes that
Fair maidens set to fix their destiny
In love ; that destiny, for which they breathe,
They sigh and pant, and live in joy, or die.
When in ripe youth the hymeneal torch
They seek to light, should disappointment come
With iron hand to dash the cup of joy
From their fair lips, hapless is then their lot :
Then shrinks their rounded buoyancy of form,
And droop their joy-inspiring eyes ; their breast 530
No longer swells with smiling hope, and life
Sets joyless in its glowing morn. Alas,
Their destiny's forlorn and incomplete !
And sickly grief will cloud each maiden's face,
As in the mirror her chang'd form she views,
And sees how useless now her shape to lace ;
How useless in bright wreaths to braid her hair !
Thus, like the rose, she buds, and blooms, and fades,
And ne'er is culled ; vainly her beauties blow.
Hark ! from the battlement of war the owl, 540
Ill-omen'd bird, chants with her dismal voice
In funeral tones, rousing the watch-dog's bay,
That with a fiercer howl the night affrights.

In mystic guise these sounds assail the spouse,
And pierce her slumbering ear ; quick palpitates
Her tender heart, and on her husband's breast
She lays her glowing cheek, and scarce she draws
Her breath ; Parma she sees in flames ; her spouse
In his blood welt'ring, and herself and babes
Whelm'd in the ruins of her falling roof. 550
She starts and shrieks ! at the same moment, then
The messenger of ill, his swift barb mounts,
That from Verona flew ; swift as the scud
That darts along the sky, fixing the gaze
Of mariners, portentous messenger
Of storms ; he heard the fox's dismal bark,
And saw the wolf's eye through the darkness gleam.
He heard the screech-owl, that to urge him on
To horrors scream'd, hooting with hollow note,
From each church tow'r he pass'd ; such omens he 560
Refus'd not, for dark scenes are to dark deeds
Allied ; and both congenial are to souls,
Who, on the stormy waters of the world
Are toss'd, careless if havens be at hand :
And as he rode along, with clatt'ring hoofs,
And harness ringing on his back, 'tis said
That witches rode beside him on the wind.
The moon blood-red appear'd ; then pale she shew'd,

Veil'd by black clouds, as if she mourning wore
For all the blood that soon must flow to earth. 570
Oh, dismal night, dread horseman, dreadful ride,
That e'en the elements could move to strife,
And from Hell's depth call to this upper world
The fiends who Eccelino's guardians were,
And fann'd with sable wings his fortunes wild.
Muffled in cloaks at toll of vesper bell
The dark conspirators each other greet,
And pass unnotic'd by the crowd ; thus oft
They meet, at night : and ere the deep debate
Begin, each other scrutinize with gaze 580
Suspicious : never can they sleep at night,
But catch their fev'rish rest by sudden starts :
Half dead and half alive, and gaunt and wan
They seem ; for e'er before their eyes they see
A scaffold or a throne, death or revenge.

Secret and silent on the third day's eve
Volpe arriv'd, nor long delay'd to seek
Conspiracy's dark haunts : her instruments
He found ; men without honour, ready still
For treason they ; for furious public zeal 590
Suspicious is, and levellers of men
Are most unfit men to conduct ; their schemes
Are formed to quench the courage, and to plunge

'The high aspiring souls in deep dismay
Honour and chivalry they cannot reach,
And so affect to hold them in contempt.
To pow'r they're ready still to bend the knee,
And thus betraying their own cause, the name
Of renegades deserve: curs'd levellers,
Who freedom's cause have marr'd, by trampling on
The noblest passions of the human heart !
Such were the men whom Volpe stirred to do
The tyrant's murd'rous work ; such are the men
Whom tyrants ever choose for instruments
To do their bloody will, and lay mankind
Prostrate before the shrine of tyranny.
Full in the midst of these now Volpe stood,
And thus to willing ears these words address'd:
" To-morrow, when the vesper bell doth ring,
Your station take at each church door, and then 610
Your daggers plunge into the hated Guelphs.
Let every quarter of the city blaze ;
Set on the rabble then to slay and root
The adverse faction out ; th' alarum bells,
With their loud din confusion shall confound ;
Their wives, and daughters, jewels, wealth, and gold,
All yours shall be, nor shall ye want support ;
For our great armies now are on the march ;

Ye are the vanguard, that must open first
With furious crash the social war ; away ! 620
Quick to your posts repair, silent as death !"
He spake ; all, with tumultuous passions fill'd,
Dispers'd, nor could they of the dreadful plan
Discussion brook (for men on action bent
Need not in vain discussion waste the time,
Or dull the edge of enterprize by words).

Now toll'd the vesper bell ; the churches all
Were throng'd, the choral pray'r re-echoes loud
Through domes and roofs within ; each saintly breast
Expanded is ; its vows to Heaven fly up ; 630
Without, each sullen brow murder contracts ;
Within, is hope and joy ; without, revenge,
Rapacity, and hateful civil strife.
Almighty God, thou lookest from thy throne
Above, with suff'rance great, beholding oft
Remorseless murder stalk o'er human kind ;
And the dread reaper, Death, mow down in scorn
Thy richest harvest, human life, erst once
To thee allied ; for in their hearts is fix'd,
Or ought to be, thy tabernacle, where 640
Thee they should know and praise ; but Hell sends forth
Her madd'ning flames, and they in social strife
Blaze forth, and Discord, her ensanguin'd head

Upreats at her command ; the passions fell,
A whirlwind raise, that cities populous
Uproots ; there, revelling in anarchy,
Man gluts each baleful passion of his soul ;
Hell dwells in him ; in darkness spiritual
He strays, bereft of God's own light divine.
The sorc'ress now, that had by magic black 650
Azzo beguil'd, infus'd her venom deep
In each bewilder'd brain : close at her heels
Death follows, as she leads the dreadful dance ;
A thousand forms she takes, and in each group
Busies herself : for Moloch fierce prepares
The bloody sacrifice of human life,
From which no age, condition, state, may be
Excepted ; all are doom'd to be devour'd
By the wide-opening jaws of massacre,
Whose eye-balls stream with lurid glare, and deal 660
Destruction swift around her frantic form,
Distorted by wild joy, and dancing to
The screams of swimming, reeling agony.
Soon from the fires the broad flame flares, and like
A forked pennon streaming in the van,
The signal gives of death ; fountains of fire
Spout upwards, and return in showers of sparks
To earth, spangling the clouds of rolling smoke,

'That thick o'er-canopy the heads of fiends
'That strive below, whose yell of rage, 670
Or pain, are mingled with th' alarm bell's din.
Heard ye the shriek of that bewilder'd dame,
Who with empurpled hands clasps to her breast
Her murder'd child, regardless of the wound,
Which through its tender, bleeding side hath sunk
In hers? See the dry eye of fixed despair
In him, the aged, good Gonfalonier',
Who sees his gallant sons around him strew'd,
With the last flush of courage printed on
Each face: they died defending him; their doom 680
Is glorious, and they lovely lie in death,
Smiling their stern defiance on the foe.

Is yon a Turkish ensign, high upborne,
With long black hair, floating adown the wind?
No, 'tis the ghastly head of Constance, once
The pride of Parma! Where, oh, where, is now
Bright chivalry? Quick mount thy steed, and draw,
Haughty Monferrat, thy avenging sword!
Rush from the summit of the snow-clad Alp,
And like the fearful avalanche come down, 690
To quench these flames, that with resistless blaze
All will consume, and a parch'd desert leave,
On which to freeze the eye with hideous blank;

Or the black ruins, that the dismal tale
Of soul-appalling conquest tell, or stand
The monuments of desolation dark ;
As those that oft on Erin's fated shore
Are seen, the ruin'd piles of greatness past,
That lonely stand, eternal hate intense
To consecrate, where nought but hate is left ; 700
Hate, deep and dark as Hell's unfathom'd pit ;
Hate, for eternal wrongs and ceaseless woes ;
Hate, that, alas ! hath yet but silent sat,
Biting the tyrant's and the bigot's chain.

Blush, Albion, when on Erin thou doth cast
Thy gloated eyes ! blush for the floods of gore
That her green fields have soak'd ! and blush for those
Into sad exile sent, to satiate all
Thy fury and rapacity, alone
Equall'd when fierce Pizarro overran 710
That land, whose mountain rills ran purest gold ;
Where bright-ey'd maids the golden altars deck'd,
And to the orb of day their homage paid !
Erin, thy plaintive harp sighs on the wind,
Like the Eolian chords ; for every breeze
Is freighted with thy moans, that speak thy woes
Unheard, unheeded, and yet unrevenge'd.
'Midst exile, blood, and chains, thou hast thy faith

Maintain'd, and for that holy faith millions
Have bled at persecution's shrine; her worst 720
Malice hath done, malice that wears the robes
Of sanctity and grace, and dares blaspheme
Mild Charity, the holiest law of God !

The sorceress now a woman's form assumes;
With blazing torch she flies from group to group ;
Around the dome she hears the faction growl,
That seem like hounds to bay the holy cross.
The Fury, like the white sea-gull, 'mid storms
That screams, and soars, and claps her wings in joy ;
So she, the pile quick mounts, and on the dome 730
Appears ; with long and rapid steps she strides
Along the rounded roof, grasping the cross ;
'Then to and fro she reels, like sailor boy
On the top gallant mast, when, in a gale,
He sends it down. Now at the cross she tugs,
And plucks it up ; then rolling o'er and o'er,
Swift falls from pinnacle to architrave,
Both roll together ; then on the hard ground
Crush many of the yelling throng beneath :
Lifeless her carcass lay, the spirit fled 740
Unhurt to animate another form.
Hell loos'd fell Havoc in her crimson robe,
Mounted on gory car, whose unrein'd steeds

With thund'ring hoofs resounded far and wide,
Swept through the streets, swift as the deadly gale
That sweeps the Carribean seas, and blasts
With yellow taint all human life around ! 747

BOOK V.

SLEEP now had press'd each heavy eye-lid down,
And vig'rous health, strong breathing from each breast,
Broke ever and anon the silence deep
Of night, that shrouded the Teutonic camp,
On Brenta's steep and slimy shore, where now
Array'd for war the Swabian monarch lay ;
The wakeful watch mark'd soon the ruddy streaks,
That, glowing in the twilight gray, were seen
O'er-topping the far Alps ; then drums, shrill fifes,
(Shriller than matin clarion of the cock, 10
That wakes the villagers to early toil,)
All, loud salute the blythe and opening morn ;
Along the line resounds the réveillé.
Saluted thus, the Sun then showers around
His golden smiles, which glitter on the tents
White as the new fall'n snow, and o'er the fields
Bright pearls profusely scatter far and wide ;
Along the line the guards alert to arms

Now stand, and in a moment more the stream
Of human life pours from the tents amain, 20
With busy hum to hail another day.
Busy they need to be, and every hour
In joy employ, whose hours are number'd all :
For step by step they march in company
With death. Such is a soldier's life, grasping
At every fleeting moment as it flies,
To fill it up, with eager transient joy !

The Emperor started from his couch ; and now,
Scenting the freshness of the morning air,
His heart within him swell'd with pride when he 30
Beheld the far-spread tented field, that seem'd
As if the Alpine snow had drifted on
The plains. He heard the neighing steeds, and soon
He saw them led in endless files to drink,
Plunging in capriole and gambol gay.
The tents are struck ; the camp is rais'd, and quick
The wains are charg'd ; the plain is bristled o'er
With arms ; the trumpets sound ; the earth rings loud
Beneath the heavy tread of feet, that fall
In slow and measur'd cadence ; and as where 40
Some mighty stream in many branches flows,
So o'er the fields in many columns flow'd
This stream of life ; each file a serpent seem'd

To writhe along ; the serpent's scaly back
Their armour shone, and upwards flash their arms ;
The spiral lightnings mark'd their onward way.
Forwards the Emperor rode, and just beneath
A canopy of aged oaks he stopp'd ;
Behind him cluster'd many knights, that like
A constellation shone ; the soul they were 50
Of that great moving mass that swept along.
Now each Teutonic tribe that drank the wave
Of Rhine, far Elbe, or Danube dark, move on ;
Nations that war do for its own sake love,
Whose stubborn tempers war excites to joy !
First came the frank and jovial Tyrolois,
Who 'mid his rugged mountains, where he bounds
From rock to rock with step as swift and light
As chamois, woos the nymph of liberty.
Tyrol ! of Freedom thou the blest retreat ; 60
Nich'd on thy rocks her nest secure is fix'd,
Far from the steps of congregated man !
Thus gaily march the Tyrolese, with bow
And quiver full of shafts, that well they know
To use ; in forest green array'd they were,
And in their caps wav'd the wild falcon's plume
With eagles' feathers mix'd ; their waists were bound
With shaggy wolf-skin belts ; and every chief

A horn had o'er his shoulder slung, that, wound,
Would fill the air with sylvan melody. 70
In front they march, and scatter on each side ;
Like hounds they make their casts, like hounds first move ;
No ambush from their rapid search secure ;
No mountain steep can tire their speed ; no glen
So deep but their bold feet dare venture down,
Alike 'mid summer's heat or winter's snow.
Marksmen unerring, swift, and unobserv'd,
Like hailstorms o'er a land their bands they pour.
With heavy tread that shakes the trembling ground,
Plodding along, with heads hung down, next move 80
The Germans, to the onslaught slow, and slow
In the retreat ; they stand against the brunt
Of war unmov'd ; and, if they're beat, their arms
They'd rather pile than fly : with patience they
Submit to all the drudgery of war.
But now appear high helmed heads and steeds
From far Bohemia's side, that onward bear
The pond'rous cuirassiers ; they are of war
The thunderbolts ; and, when of victory
The scales hang in suspense, rush in : loud sounds 90
The ringing shock when they the battle join,
And onward pass o'er wrecks of men and arms.
With haughty eye the Emperor now view'd

His passing host, and to Vincenza bade
The troops march on ; with expectation high
Flush'd was each heart ; loud was the shout that rose
To greet his ear ; and, as he pass'd along,
The vision of fair vict'ry seem'd to flit
Before him ; vict'ry that doth ever float
In view of daring souls, where dastards see 100
Nought but dishonour foul ; but the high will
Can vict'ry e'er command, and she obeys !
Oh, will divine ! portion of God himself,
For God is will, will free without a cause ;
With terror fraught, when sudden it cuts off
Great chieftains, and kings from their mighty throne
Hurls down ; then their anointed bodies lie
In narrow cells mould'ring to dust, and straight
To God the will returns (the will which is
The soul). Can man deny his soul ? What is't 110
That, when the battle roars, and the hot earth
With human carnage reeks, spite of cold fear,
That chills his blood and shakes his every limb,
To the fight spurs him on ? What but his will ?
His will, his soul, that from his frame distinct
Ever exists, nor knows mortality !
If souls exist not, should we honour feel ?
And glory, virtue's highest, best reward ?

Flush'd with bright hope the warlike monarch rode,
And ord'ring to the van the horse, he press'd 120
Them on ; all day, all night, they march'd, and soon
Encompass'd round that city doom'd to fall.
Crowding on roofs and ramparts high, all now
Behold their jeopardy : a glitt'ring wall
Of steel enclos'd them round. The herald slow
Advancing to the gate with flourish high
Of trumpets, thus the haughty summons gave :
“ Men of Vincenza, listen to my words :
Before your fated walls the Emp'ror stands,
Son of the far fam'd Barbarossa ; he 130
Whose prowess vast hath deeply stamp'd the seal
Of his immortal fame o'er half the world !
Remember Milan's fate, o'er whose proud walls
The ploughshare of destruction pass'd ; yield then,
Lest now our army, like tornado, sweep
O'er your good town, scatt'ring its wrecks to air.”
He said, the banners wav'd, and swords were clash'd,
And lances shook aloft ; loud cries of joy
Arose ; far as the eye could see, the dust
That rose of many columns the approach 140
Denoted ; mountain pines now seem'd to move
Over the plain ; a fearful view to eye
Of peaceful burgher ; but the soldier's heart

Fir'd at the sight, for well he knew the flow'r
Of honour is 'mid danger only pluck'd.
O'er the high gate, between two turrets fill'd
With armed men, the seneschal appears.
Cluster'd around him stand knights, and grave groups
Of wealthy burghers ; on the roofs behind
Sighs many a dame, and closer to her breast 150
Presses her child ; anxious all view the strange
Beleaguering host, which now doth multiply
On ev'ry side ; resound the voices loud
Of chieftains bold against the echoing walls,
In accents barb'rous to Italian ears.
High over head gleams now the standard white
With the red cross, the ensign of the League,
And emblem of the sacrifice divine.
Soon to the summons thus the seneschal
Replied : " What seek ye then, ye whom the North 160
Hath from her frozen loins pour'd forth ? I ween
'Tis conquest that ye seek, and would divide
The spoils of this devoted land ; ye came,
Like locusts, to devour, for not a blade
Of grass doth flourish 'neath your feet ; the League,
That hath against your pow'r the ensign rais'd
Of the red cross, this city to our care
Entrusts ; and though the first that you attack,

Our city shall not be the first to yield ;
Though Milan's walls have fall'n, yet fearless we. 170
Cities shall fall, and many a blaze affright
Heaven's arch, dazzling the sun at noon, before
All Italy a master shall receive.
Hearken to our reply : ' God speed the League,
The Church, and Liberty !' The pale flag wav'd,
Drums roll'd, fifes scream'd, and trumpets bray'd ;
From walls and ramparts to high roofs and domes
Echo'd th' inspiring cry, " God speed the League,
The Church, and Liberty !" Defiance thus
Was hurl'd upon the foe. With vacant stare 180
And wild surprise gazing, the Kaiser knit
His brow, and loud exclaim'd, " Cost what it may,
Forthwith I'll storm the town !" With ire he wheel'd
His steed around, deep plunging in his sides
Each spur ; away he flew, and to his tent
He call'd his hoary chiefs, long us'd to war.
The blanch'd bearded vet'rans duteous soon
Attend ; a healthy hue of brown ting'd o'er
Their warlike features, and their strong knit limbs
Elastic bore their mail, hauberk, and helm 190
Commodious, sat, in summer's heat, and chill
Of winter snows ; princes, and dukes, and counts,
And barons of the gothic realm were there :

Thine offspring, Germany, whose forests vast
'Neath the green leaf, in the dark sylvan shades,
Have nurs'd the nymph of liberty, who took
Her early flight to Albion's safer shores.
Her high priest, glorious Alfred, then pour'd forth
His mighty soul to her, and fenc'd about
Her fane: time was, when in the woodlands gay, 200
This fair nymph sported, and the wild flow'rs cull'd,
That grew on Albion's mead; but she hath since
A painted prostitute become; alas!
In gaudy robes she flaunts about, and leers
On power: her native virtue now is lost
That brac'd the gothic arm; her mem'ry now
Remains but in the poet's song, whose lay,
If tun'd to truth, a sad lament will sing
For her, who now but in wild fancy dwells.
The Emp'ror thus address'd the martial throng: 210
“ Let us, with thunderbolt of war, confound
The pride of this presumptuous League, that dares
Resist great Barbarossa's son; that will
Not warning take from Milan's awful fate.
To-morrow, knights, th' assault we'll give to crowd
These haughty walls with our Teutonic bands,
Who in a gallant escalade shall mount,
And in the town shall be repaid for all

Their toil and danger: rumour, trumpet-tongued,
On wings of winds shall fly abroad, and spread 220
The terror of our name, with awe mankind
To strike, who haply then may deem in dread
That my departed sire fights in our van.
Our foes, like timid deer, will covert seek.
The beams that flash from our bright arms will soon
This League dissolve, as the bright sun the snow.”
He spoke; joy sparkled o’er each face; their hearts
With the warm thrill of quicken’d blood beat high.
In council deep th’ attack is now resolv’d;
To each commander is his post assign’d. 230
Throughout the camp the busy stir arose
Of preparation; and, as low declin’d
The evening sun, his fainter rays were shed
On the firm thick array: no drum was beat,
Silent the camp, save the loud voice of chiefs.
Each valiant cohort then the Emp’ror view’d,
Exhorting them to plant his eagles on
The walls. Full many a youthful breast beat high
With hope; but some were chill’d, and would that quick
The onslaught should be made. The chosen bands 240
Move out of camp; firm and compact the close
Battalions march; and, save the measur’d tread
Of heavy falling feet, no sound is heard,

Except the busy hum of idlers, who
Approach in cautious crowds, and lay upon
The slopes—as in a theatre—to view
The dreadful drama at their ease. They were
Not warned for duty on that day, and though
No booty could they gain, no risk they run.
On to the walls th' attackers press, and soon 250
The bale-fires blaze from tow'r and steeple ; loud
Th' alarm bells toll, and then the rattling drums
Louder and louder roll, and the pale flag
Waves on the battlement, where, in array,
The archers stand with arrow fix'd in bow.
The huge portcullis, rushing down, now bites
The ground with its long teeth. The bugle sounds,
And forward to the ditch th' assaulters rush,
And o'er the walls a show'r of arrows fly ;
Nor wants there meet return : th' assailants thick 260
Back driv'n recede, but rally quick again,
The scaling ladders to the walls to fix,
And strive to tear the ensign down that floats
And frowns defiance on the throng below.
With shields o'er heads the scaly tortoise quick
Hath pass'd the ditch, and 'gainst the city walls
They fix the ladders, climbing 'mid a din
That rends the skies. Hot pitch and burning tar,

With flaming brands, come show'ring on their heads;
The ladders are hurl'd down; jav'lines and stones 271
Darken the air, and shrieks and cries of pain
Rise from below, and answer to wild screams
Of triumph from above. Still forward press
Cohorts on cohorts. Streams in vain the flag,
In vain drums roll, in vain the shout of war
Thrills through each breast; the walls now scaled are
Amid the clash of swords and push of pikes.
Foe seizes foeman by the throat, and both
Come toppling o'er, yet with disjointed limbs
Each other strangle in the ditch; high walls 280
Come tumbling down. A breach is made; within
A phalanx firm is form'd, whose breasts oppose
An iron wall; devoted in the midst
The seneschal's loud voice is heard, "God speed
The League, the Church, and Liberty!" Onwards
The torrent rushes down, as oft doth rush
From rugged Appenine the melted snow,
Bearing uprooted trees to Arno's flood,
That erst was wont in peaceful stream to flow;
With force resistless on their rugged path 291
The surges sweep along, nor brook delay.
So rush'd from wall, and through the op'ning breach
The foaming flood of war; that human tide,

By fiercest storm of human passions blown,
Rapid, resistless, ruthless, rushing on,
Now join'd the dreadful shock. Swords rung on shields
And helms a peal, the din of which was heard
In Hell, and rous'd the moping spirits, who,
With joy beheld fresh bands each moment quick
Succeed ; ghastly with many a gaping wound, 300
Death-harden'd features, and rough clotted hair
Drizzling down drops of blood, gloomy and dank
Like a November morn ; breast was to breast
Oppos'd, and foot to foot, and hand to hand.
Loud does the welkin ring, on topmost roofs
The women swarm in crowds ; like sprites, with spells,
And frantic voice, and cries, they join amain
The clamour fierce ; and on the foemen's heads
Pour boiling oil, and melted lead, and each
Utensil that comes ready to the hand. 310
And in their giddy rage, toppling fall o'er,
Plunge on uplifted pikes, writhe, and expire.
The phalanx broken is, and flies, o'erthrown,
Flies fast on ev'ry side ; churches to some
Asylum give to 'scape the gen'ral doom.
Swift-footed death o'ertakes the fated throng ;
On each side falchions gleam, thirsty alike
For blood of knight or the plebeian hind ;

All undistinguished lie, trodden in dust,
Disfigur'd and unknown ; not sacred is 320
The hearth domestic ; household gods behold
Rapine, and blood, and lust triumphant reign !
On this ill-fated city was pour'd forth
The vials of their wrath ; her woes were made
A terror to the League, she blaz'd the while
In flames. Nor did these horrors cease, until,
With wine and wassail drunk, the victors sank
To brutal sleep, regardless of the blow
That hangs above their reckless heads. Thus man
Doth play in turns the part of gods and brutes ! 330
Oh ! Muse, who sat on Helicon and drank
The font of Hippocrene, sing now the Greeks
Immortal ! they, whose spirit slumb'ring long,
Ne'er hath been quench'd ! for, whilst I the sad fate
Relate of this fair city, burst upon
My raptur'd ear the glorious deeds of Greece,
Now rising from her living tomb, as bright
As in that day, when back at Marathon
She drove the hordes barbarian ; then the wheels
Of her victorious car were clogged with slain, 340
The fury of her fiery steeds was check'd,
And myriads 'scap'd the keen-edg'd sword, and fled
From the dread waving of her plumed crest,

Fraught with the terrors of the thunderbolt.
Again, again that dreadful plumage waves,
The banner of the cross a meteor streams,
Blasting the crescent in its sickly wane.
Freedom in Greece is rous'd ; celestial fires
Play round her heav'nly form, and shed their light
On nations' dazzled sight. Ye, awful manes 350
Of th' age heroic, from the tomb at length
Have rais'd yourselves ; again your martial tread
Affrights dark tyranny, that hides in shame
Her gorgon head, abash'd since that dread day
When far from Transatlantic realms she fled.
And yet, oh, Muse ! assume a higher strain !
Catch the prophetic fire as erst of old.
Hark ! once again I hear the awful voice
Pealing from Sinai's top in thunders loud,
That shall disperse the smoke that from the North 360
Came down, and long hath its dank gloom hung o'er
Zion offuscated, and dimmed the light
Divine, that like a glory once had crown'd
Her head celestial ! That thick smoke sprang from
Mecca's dark vapour foul, and driv'n from thence
By Afric's burning blast, northward its way
It sped, and scath'd Iberia's fertile soil,
Scaling the Pyrenean wall, till hence

By chivalry's bright light at length 'twas driv'n.
Then was the blest Redeemer's tomb redeem'd, 370
Yet never held ; for from the North pour'd down
The fiery Ottomites. Were they by thee
Predicted, Prophet most sublime, who sing'st
Thy God's most lofty song, Isaiah ! thou,
In these sad strains, " Howl, oh, gate ! cry thou, oh,
City ! thou, Palestina, art dissolv'd !
For, from the North shall come a smoke," that first
From Mecca shall arise and spread ; but soon
Mecca shall be destroy'd ! for 'mid the sands
Of Araby hath risen up a tribe, 380
God in their hearts and nature on their lips ;
The Moslems they shall smite, and scatter wide
Th' impostor's dust in air, and in his tomb
Extinguish the dim gleam of his false lights,
That long have burn'd before his shrine accurs'd.
No more shall woman's angel form, immur'd
Within the dark seraglio's hated walls,
Waste all its sweets unseen, or doom'd at best
To sate the lust of willing brutes, that, shap'd
Like man, have man's intelligence abjur'd. 390
Darkness to them is light, and brutal force
Their law ; murder and rapine in their code
Of virtues shine ; and ignorance profound

Is their philosophy, spreading, from whence
Rolls the Atlantic wave, to Ganges' tide.
Angels of darkness hover'd o'er thy birth,
Son of Abdallah ! sprung of Koreish tribe,
Hermit of Hera's mount, thou didst burst forth
A conqueror ! and God proclaim'd, in blood
And not in peace ! Man's baleful passions bound 400
His soul to thee ; then, bright Intelligence,
First-born of Heaven, her spangled pinions spread
Affrighted to the skies, and fled afar.
But now again she lights upon the sands
Of scorching Araby, and, with her eyes
Sparkling in joy, leads to the light the tribe
Of Wahabees. The Moslem's day is past,
And all his crimes shall be quite rooted out ;
The scorching hand of Freedom, fiercer far
Than dog-star's ray, his cities soon shall blast, 410
And overthrow his horsemen proud and fierce.
Egypt, thou land in darkness magic-bound,
Thou shalt be free ! and the proud turban roll
In dust, and mosques a bale-fire shall blaze forth,
To guide the steps of slumb'ring Liberty !
Judah shall weep no more ! and Zion then,
Like a young blooming bride, again be join'd
To universal love ; love that still springs

From reason, whose rich harvest shall be reap'd
From plains erst blighted, and from barren rocks ! 430
Then shall the days and years be spent and past,
In which, oh women, ye were troubled sore ;
And then no more briars and thorns shall grow
Upon the chosen people's land ; no more
Their palaces forsaken be, their tow'rs
A refuge to the wild ass ; for from high
The spirit shall descend, and fruitfully
Shall flourish in the wilderness ; and there
Judgment shall dwell, and peace and righteousness
Hail down upon the land ! Such is God's will 440
Declar'd, though to us dark are his ways.
Euphrates shall rejoice again to roll
Through happy fields, and lawless force afar
Be banish'd : thou, Mount Ararat, again
Shalt see mankind from deep destruction sav'd,
More dire than that the holy ark outrode.
Oh, Holy Sepulchre ! again shalt thou
The light behold, though doom'd so many years
In darkness to remain. In darkness sad
The pilgrims' tears flow'd down their cheeks on stones
Knee-worn ; in vain hath knighthood girt the sword,
And the red cross assum'd ; the appointed time
Of thy deliverance, Zion, was not come.

Awhile, oh, Lebanon ! thy cedar's shade
Wav'd o'er the Moslem ; and in Kedron's vale
Awhile the palms have spread their lofty boughs
O'er Paynim heads, who drank Siloa's brook.
In vain 'twas then for her deliverance
The red-cross wav'd, and Godfrey, Raymond, bled,
And Tancred, brightest flow'r of chivalry ! 460
Or, later, England's lion-hearted king ;
Who not for rapine drew the sword, such as
Far distant India since hath mourn'd, where trade
At Mammon's shrine hath millions sacrificed.
Honour then beam'd round England's lofty brow,
And shone a glory ; then her sword was not
Polluted in the noisome sink of wealth.
But the great prophesies are now to be
Fulfill'd ! God darkly to the semblance points
Of a high path, that o'er the rugged waste 470
Of life conducts, and calling into play
His spirit within us, that thus wak'd its high
Intent doth follow, and beholdeth God
Radiant in life and love, athwart the clouds
Of our dark passions, which awhile obscur'd
His throne, where bright effulgence increate
Is seen alone by the undazzled eyes
Of virtue. Tyrants and false prophets, ye

Tremble, for know your hour is struck ; prepare
 For universal hate. Then rise, rejoice, 480
 Children of sorrow ! with gigantic strides
 Prepare to run your glorious course uncheck'd.
 When stern oppression bends man to the earth,
 God bids him rise and smite th' oppressor down.
 In mercy thus he executes the first
 Decree of God, his safety then to seek
 In peace and health, for freedom safety is.
 Children of sorrow, then, arise, it is
 Your noblest duty e'en to God above.
 All, hail, thou Sacred Volume ! thou, in which 490
 These thoughts are in celestial fire enwrap !
 Cold and blind reason ne'er can reach thy height
 Or search thy mystic depth ; 'tis but the voice
 Inspir'd that inward breathes that can illum
 Thy awful page, which reason sets at naught.
 Thee has the light upheld from darkness deep ;
 For of thy light divine is proof enough
 Thy mere existence ; thou'rt the voice that speaks
 Which reason cannot reach, known but to hearts
 Inspir'd, illum'd, and borne on wings of God.
 Hail, Hope divine ! together thou two worlds
 Hast join'd, an arch hast thrown o'er the dark gulf
 Of Death ! for thou declar'st it not eterne.

Reason, still cold and blind, can never soar
Into the heights thou reachest ; thou canst pass 500
All space and time, and in eternity
Dost ever dwell : the soul of man is then
In awful life eternal born, else ne'er
It could eternity conceive or wish :
For hope divine is co-eternal with
The Great Supreme, Eternal Increate.

END OF BOOK V.

BOOK VI.

Now the red star shot rays, show'ring in flames
Hot war on earth, and Eccelino's breast
Inspir'd, with mighty Mars in fiercest mood ;
When he, the mailed god, his iron car
Mounting, his gleaming lance shakes high in air,
And round him scatters tumult, wounds, and death.
Behold the god ! The red horse-hair streaming
From his helm'd head ; with eye and front serene
He guides, directs, and stems the tide of war.
As when the sea, toss'd back, splashes on high 10
The angry spray, its course impeded by
Th' opposing rocks, thus do his plunging steeds,
With crimson nostril and flame-darting eye,
Whirl his gore-clotted wheels along o'er heaps
Of slain ; pie-ball'd with blood, his armour's blaze
Gleams like a burning torch, that blasts the sight
Of combatants that fall on every side,
And serve to swell his dreadful hecatomb.

From his helm'd head flash flames of fire, around
Beam lurid lightnings from his dreaded shield, 20
And thunder rattles from his chariot wheels.
Such is the god, and such he fir'd the breast
Of Eccelino, when the red star gleam'd
With deeper glare, and told him the dire fate
Of that unhappy city, storm'd and sack'd,
And burn'd ; for he, half man and demon half,
Could in the high stars read the deeds of fate.
The blasting dog-star was his guide, and then
Ripen'd his fortunes rank, and in his breast
Infus'd the spirit of the warlike god ; 30
Which, till his dismal hour was struck, bore all
Resistance down, and in th' ascendant high
Plac'd him, to raise and rule the raging strife.
Swifter the tidings through the red star came,
Than borne by speed of winged Mercury ;
And as the night advanc'd, reclining in
His tent, Romano now beheld the pale
Blue flame arise that erst his mother's form
Had mantled ; once that flame his steps had led
To Padua from her grave, and hover'd now 40
Around a bloody hand, that marshall'd him
To Parma ; starting up, upon his tent
He saw the omen fix, and Buffa then

Before him stalk'd, holding aloft a wreath
Of Vict'ry, pointing to Hermione,
At grated window, in a tower immur'd,
With gushing eyes, and floating hair, and hands
Clasp'd in deep agony; and farther on
Azzo he saw (as if in his despite)
Mounted on winged dragon, that around 50
On Padua spouted flames. Obedient still
The monster seem'd to him, as if he rode
A manag'd horse, and from its burnish'd sides
Of gold, a light came forth, dazzling the sight;
The vision oft was lost in show'rs of blood
And rolling clouds of smoke, and then again
Its splendor like the noontide sun would blaze:
Turn'd Eccelino quick away his head;
When in his tent, he seem'd in dungeon barr'd;
His tent a dungeon now appear'd; he felt 60
The cold damp hand of death chill his warm blood:
He deem'd the presage told, that he should not
On field of battle die. Perplex'd he threw
Himself upon a couch, and starting seiz'd
Short moments of disturb'd and fev'rish sleep;
Disturb'd by dreams, which echos are from Heav'n
Or Hell, as most our hearts to either place
Incline; for dreams between them both still flit.

These visions sank in his dark soul, and left
Their stamp, more desp'rate steel'd his heart ; they but
Obscur'd the vision of his mind, and in
Wild tumult rous'd the whirlwind of his rage.
Impatiently he waited the approach
Of his ally, and to receive his aid
By deference meet, he order'd under arms
His war-worn host, which could his rival's well
Outshine ; for none could then with his compare.
In his rich armour he was now bedight,
Of shining black, with gold, and his bright shield
Richly emboss'd, was o'er his shoulders thrown. 80
His helmet too of burnish'd gold ; above
Nodded his plumes of black, and his full beard
His corslet swept ; he rode a dark brown steed
Cover'd with net of brass, the chains so wrought,
That they defensive armour prov'd ; with slow
Majestic pace he mov'd along, and with
A piercing eye review'd th' embattled host,
Stern warriors all, cast in the mould of war.
Calmly they look'd defiance, and was writ
On their bronz'd skin, o'er rigid muscle drawn, 90
Deep and indelible war's veteran stamp.
Their hirsute beards, and fiercest eyes gleam bright,
Beneath the avantayle they seem'd to be

Not of one nation, but of arms and war
The denizens. Rapid and silent were
Their movements, or on horseback or on foot ;
Each officer a chief might be, and each
Soldier an officer might seem ; their arms
Were gorgeous, and high manag'd were their steeds,
Which scorn'd the earth, and shook the trembling plain,
Scatt'ring their foam abroad from champing jaws,
Which hung upon the field like the sea's spray
On the sand-drifted beach ; and at each charge
Or wheel, they smote the ground, and toss'd aloft
Their heads in pride, pawing the soil beneath.
In front of this proud host Romano stood,
There with a conscious pride awaited now
The approach of th' Emperor. Dense clouds of dust
Soon in the thick horizon rose, and seem'd
To roll to the far camp ; knight after knight 110
Harness'd complete and brilliant, forward sped,
And skimming o'er the plain announc'd th' approach.
Then prouder he in front of his bold chiefs
Nodded assent, in haughty silence wrapt.
At length the Kaiser to the front advanc'd
Of the thick squadron, where Romano stood.
The brazen trumpet bray'd, with louder crash
Drums and shrill fifes resound, pennons and flags

Now duteous touch the earth : Romano drops
His sword, and hails aloud th' Imperial chief ; 120
From rank to rank the rapid chorus runs.
" Hail to thy prowess high, renowned chief,"
The Swabian monarch cried, " ne'er did my sight
Astounded yet behold in field array
So warlike and so fine ; splendid their arms
And rich their dress, their steeds surpassing all
I've yet beheld, but in their looks, Mars frowns
Defiance stern ; in thee methinks the God
Of war I see." To him the wily chief
Replied : " Imperial chief, if these thy words, 130
Which graciously now fall on my poor ears
Be true, it is thy presence that hath now
Inspir'd with thy high courage me and them.
Great Barbarossa's son I see, and we
Have caught some rays of glory, that do crown
His lofty brow : to thee, oh chief, all hail !"
Again the clamour to the skies ascends,
Rousing th' ill omen'd birds, the carrion crows ;
They, that of death the sable followers are,
From instinct keen view now with fierce delight 140
A gorgeous feast in preparation sure.
To shouts below they join their screams above,
Dark'ning the air with their black wings, nor yet

Are they in vain the scavengers of death,
But oft have sav'd from pestilence the land.

Now to Romano's tent the chiefs retire
To council, there mature the plans of each
For the great war, to rivet fast the chains
Of Italy, hence doom'd no rest to find.

Three days in consultation deep the chiefs 150

Remain'd, and to their friends their messengers
Dispatch'd ; then Eccelino bade to Padua's halls
Th' Imperial chief, for in her broken walls

Now reign'd sole master he : his fortunes here
Triumphant rose, and all the hated Guelphs

Were rooted out, and here had thousands fall'n.

Since Nero's days no havoc had been seen

In Italy that might with this compare ;

Horrors succeeded horrors on the soul,

Horrors that oft a fev'rish dream appear, 160

When fancy to the Stygian lake descends,

And prowls in gloomy realms, where shades of death

In darkness wander, hopeless and forlorn.

Far other scenes awhile awake my song,

Scenes chang'd from blood and woe to mirth and dance,

Wild jollity and luxury ; where erst

Had flow'd a tide of human gore now flow'd

The juice of grape ; Bacchus here show'd his face

With midnight revel rubicond, and mad
Circean orgies with fell magic mix'd. 170
At the high feast a guest invisible,
Buffa, unbidden, took her place, intent
With well tim'd art the monarch to beguile,
Sprinkling on him the juice that had beguil'd
Este and his fair nymph Hermione:
Invisible the sorc'ress scatters wide
Her spells around, on soldiers, mailed knights,
And ladies fair. Now all in Padua's walls
Prepare th' imperial guest to greet when first
The rosy morning fragrant opes the day, 180
Joyous beyond what had been seen before;
Full five miles from the city gates, behold
The way is lined by citizens, and troops
Of nobles, and of knights, high dames, and nymphs,
Graceful on palfreys led by stripling youths;
Sweet sounds of flutes and divers instruments
Delicious music give, and Pleasure gay
Flaunts in her purple robes, and in her hand
A wreath of roses holds, with myrtle twin'd,
To crown the brow of the beguiled chief. 190
Gay flutters every woman's heart, that late
Had sunk with woe, ready to fall in nets
That Pleasure weaves; her vision deeply pierc'd

Each captive soul, and every heart now caught.
Mounted on steeds richly caparison'd,
With golden tassels hanging to the ground,
The Swabian monarch and Romano meet ;
Royal they both appear, two suns, as each
The other would eclipse ; the rays of each
Are dimm'd by th' other's brightness. On the brow 200
Of Eccelino seem'd to sit the cares
Of empire, more than the imperial chief
Could shew ; and war was flashing in his eyes,
And oft his visage was o'ercast with gloom
Of Hell, affrighting pleasure far away ;
And none might e'er withstand his dreaded glance.
The Emp'ror follow'd close a cavalcade
Of gallant knights, but Eccelino came
Unguarded ; yet, to swell his pride of state,
There wanted not of nobles and of knights, 210
Nor of ambassadors, who came to sue
And claim protection ; Saracens, and Greeks,
And eastern slaves were there, that coursers rode,
And threw the bounding jav'lin as they rode.
The Emp'ror view'd the glorious pageantry
Surpris'd, for such before he ne'er had seen.
Now gorgeous chariots roll along, emboss'd
With gold ; on velvet cushions ladies fair

Recline, floating, like goddesses, sublime
On clouds Olympic ; and as moves along 220
The glitt'ring pageant amid loud acclaims,
Rich tap'stry decks the walls, and fragrant flowers,
Falling on moving heads that glide below,
By fairest hands are thrown, from balcony
And casement crowded ; so that now appears
Down show'ring an enchanted fall of snow,
Colour'd with variegated hues, and sprigs
Of myrtle, that the air perfume ; onwards
The Emperor rode, and at the Bishop's gate
Alights. Oh, Padua, ill beseem'd thee then, 230
And ill became these gay festivities
Thy ruin'd walls, and streets that reek'd with gore.
Night wears her sable robe, and numberless
The torches gleam, and make a mimic day,
And wine, and wassail, and mad revelry,
Prevail ; now the loud shout and rattling din
Is heard, and merry dance ushers the morn,
That sees the wild confusion with deep shame
Of that disorder'd night, whose wicked shouts
Of joy had pierc'd e'en to the dungeon's depth, 240
Where speechless agony then stood aghast,
From fev'rish slumbers woke by orgies hot,
Furious, and lustful, and continued long.

When senseless tyranny insults mankind,
And blood and brutal orgies wild inflame
Each brutal breast, the conqu'ror knows no wrong;
Vengeance and malice steel his cruel heart,
And lovely woman still excites his keen
Unsated appetite, and mother's tears
And father's prayers but fan the furious flame. 250
Oh, Nations! stand or fall, be trodden down,
Ere lowly bend beneath a conqu'ror's feet:
Behold your scatter'd ranks by furious troops
Down trodden, and the mangled limbs of friends
Dying in torture writhe; your homesteads blaze;
Their crumbling roofs on wife and children fall;
See devastation flood the land, and worst
Of ills, but still to conquest ne'er bow down!
Oh, war! oh, horrid war! thou'rt sweeter far,
Cloth'd in thy robes of flame, than conquest fixed. 260
The hideous clamor to the dungeon keep
Now penetrates, to whose dank walls were chain'd
The good and great; and here was virtue seen
Squalid with suffering grown, praying relief
Of death. 'To such Death shews himself in robes
Form'd of Hope's roseate hues; to such he seems
An angel fair with spangled wings of light,
On whose bright breast is written "Hope," in flames

Celestial, mild, and brilliant; and, instead
Of his dread dart, his right hand holds a torch 270
Of love undying, such as Hymen bears
When nuptial vows unite two melting hearts
In one; the anguish of their souls is then
Chas'd far by softest strain of heavenly song.
Such bright joy does Religion give; thus high
The soul her best prerogative asserts;
For the unbounded soul can shift her seat,
And in an instant leave the body chain'd
Behind, to soar awhile above, then shed
On the imprison'd body a new joy, 280
That from the empyrean she hath pluck'd,
Soaring aloft on wings of rosy Hope!
Meanwhile, the council of th' assembled League,
That in Bologna sat, awoke; dangers,
Thick'ning around, rouse them at length no more
To waste the precious time in idle war
Of words. Pistruccio, Florence' legate high,
Arose; he the most daring spirit of all,
With mighty grasp laid hold on others' fear;
With heav'nly music was his deep ton'd voice 290
High fraught; no one could raise the storm of soul
Like him; no one like him could headlong plunge
A nation in fierce war; his tide of words

Mellifluous stream'd, a flow of eloquence,
Resistless in its full and deep-ton'd sound.
With dextrous rhetoric he charm'd all hearts ;
Grave and impressive then he rose, and thus
Th' assembled League address'd, " Oh, legates, now
The moment is arriv'd, when ye must strive
With all the virtue of the states, nor yield 300
Until we can exclaim, with our whole soul
And body, have we fought, fought the best fight.
My voice for war I raise ; the child unborn
Shall feel our efforts, glorying in our fame.
You ask the object of the war : I say
'Tis for security and peace we fight ;
No peace is there, I ween, whilst our fell foes
Pollute our native soil : on Parma look,
Parma that reeks with patriot blood ; our friends
Slaughter'd by thousands there ; Vincenza too 310
Is sack'd and burn'd : Padua, that charnel house,
(That should for pardon sue to God and man,
Both outrag'd) is of revelry the scene,
As if humanity to mock ; we fight
For our Religion pure, for sacred laws
Descended unto us from glorious times.
They fight for rapine and for lawless rule,
That so their bankrupt coffers they may fill

With product of our arts and industry.
For us the sail its swelling bosom spreads 320
To Eastern suns, freighted to Afric's shore,
And fertile Nile, or from Aleppo far,
With spice, or gems of Ind, or Syrian gum ;
So would Imperial Tyre and Sidon now
In arts and commerce second be to us.
Stay then the torrent, that like lava-flood
Pours o'er the land a liquid stream of fire ;
Arrest the bold career of him, who now
Would to his sword appeal, would trample on
Religion, justice ; and your country save 330
From thralldom, such as ne'er disgrac'd mankind."
He spake ; the roofs resounded with loud cheers.
Bordicci next arose to answer him,
With vehemence of speech, that drew forth shouts,
Not cheers ; he was for peace the advocate ;
Ruin predicted soon on Italy
Would fall, if this insensate war should last.
Many there follow'd on each side ; but at
The close the voices were for war, and all
On Esté fix'd to lead to war the proud 340
Confed'rate host, and strive to stop the mass
Of vet'ran armies that now threat'ning mov'd.
Esté the captain was with loud acclaim

Proclaim'd of all the forces of the League ;
His heart swell'd high with conscious pride, and now
He felt the vision of Hermione
Was true, when she in holy trance beheld
His form transfigured in the morning star.
Lonely she sat, nor e'er had quitted yet
The western tower, from whence she view'd afar 350
The squadrons winding o'er the distant lea.
She dwelt in recollection of past bliss,
Nor dared to hope for future, so sweet was
The past, but rather languish'd in desire ;
She languish'd without hope, and her lost bliss
In love's embrace too great had been to last ;
Nor could she hope renewal of scenes gone,
That cross'd like dreams her melancholy soul.
Love is th' enchanted mantle that doth e'er
The woman's soul envelop, as doth high 360
Ambition wrap the fiercer soul of man.
Still other cares oppress'd her tender heart ;
This gentle dame was most unfit to rule
The boiling mettle of the warlike knights,
And quell the feuds that love provok'd, now pent
Within the castle walls ; two virgins fair,
'Mong many gentle dames of high degree,
Her fav'rites were ; Lucinda, grave and mild

And Viola, inconstant, giddy, gay;
Her's 'twas to lead the mazy dance with grace, 370
And in the sylvan chase like roe to bound
O'er hill and dale on palfrey light; at eve
Sweetly she sung, (her voice might emulate
The matchless lay of nightingale,) and oft
In merry sportive vein would with the boy
Frolic, the arch imp of the Paphian queen:
Such pranks she play'd, that he was forc'd to lie
In wait to aim his shafts, from ambush hit
Her wanton heart; knights, squires, and troubadours
She would alike beguile; fly, flutter round, 380
Like the swift swallow's flight on summer eve;
For ever near she was, yet never caught.
But Cupid, soon fatigu'd, sought his revenge,
Nor long will e'er the imp delay to catch
His victims in his treach'rous net, that spreads
Like the thin gossamer unseen, unless
Floating in sun-beam light, where fancy wild
Gives it an adamantine texture firm.
Oh! Fancy gay, with thee I frolic oft,
And nought but thy bright colours sparkling round 390
Can see; grant me but Fancy then, the world's
Realities, view'd through her prism, will flit
Gaily before my view; and thou, fair Hope,

Unsullied yet by touch, untangible,
Wilt soar with roseate wing to fix aloft
Our dizzy sight, and make us feel to spurn
With buoyant life the dull cold clods of earth.

Far to the west, and o'er the distant lea,
An ancient forest spread its lengthen'd gloom
Of hoary oaks, whose rugged bark by age
Was bleach'd, whose mossgrown roots suck'd deeply from
The humid paps of earth primeval, and
Untam'd; their pond'rous branches widely spread,
And close entwin'd, another forest form'd
In air; and, 'neath the lofty gothic roof
That by the trunks sustained was, each plant
That sylvan shades adorn luxuriant grew:
The waving broom, and prickly gorse, with flower
Of brightest gold; the hawthorn, fragrant in
Its fleecy blossoms, seeming capp'd with snow; 419
The holly, with red berry rich, and green
Of deepest dye; and fern, of stately stag
Delight. There were the haunts of tusky boar,
And roe, and deer, and hare; and there, in plains
Ruddy with flow'ring heath, by pool, or brook,
Fancy hath seen chaste Dian and her nymphs.
Silent this deep and awful shade, save when
It echoed to the life-inspiring sound

Of horn, and eager hound, and hunter's cry.
To chase the deer, and spear the bristled boar 420
Within the precincts of the wood, was oft
The pastime of the house of Est' : knights, dames,
And damsels, all pursued the healthy sport ;
And, on the plains beyond, the setting sun
Saw tow'ring falcon fly from ladies' wrist,
And strike the flapping heron in her flight.
On chesnut barb fair Viola oft wheel'd,
Unhooding then her hawk, graceful, she bid
Him fly ; and as he tow'r'd, madly she rode,
With hand upheld, to call him to her lure ; 430
And on her swift career the quarry she
Was to surrounding knights, that lur'd their hearts.
The vesper bell had toll'd the day's decline,
When she, in frolic mood, darted at speed
Through the thick wood ; the knights pursuing, all
Are scatter'd wide ; the damsel, breaking through
The darksome glades to gain the ready way,
In ambush falls of ruffians dark, who hands
Upon her lay, and tear her from her horse.
Oh, piteous case, for lady fair and gay ! 440
The villains seiz'd her with their ruffian hands,
Rudely defiling her all o'er ; they tore
Her raven hair ; her garments were all rent,

And on the ground they dragg'd her down; her breast
By rude and lustful gaze polluted was.
Loudly she shriek'd, and then with many a tear
Hot-gushing from her eye, she cried for help.
Florestan heard her cries, and through the brake
Plunging, by gleam of moon, beheld her plight.
Forwards he bent low o'er his fiery steed, 450
Seizing a sapling oak he tore it out
The ground, his shoulders broad, and brawny arms
Were strain'd with the uprooting tug; forwards
He spurr'd his horse, and then like Hercules
Brandish'd the sapling o'er his head, and on
The ruffians let it fall with thund'ring shock.
Two smote he down to earth and death, and one
Was trodden 'neath his courser's hoofs; two more
Glided away beneath the lofty trees,
Unseen. Soon to the castle clatt'ring came 460
The cavalcade. A knight there was among
The rest, Sir Guyon he was nam'd, his mood
Was sullen; high and ranc'rous was his pride;
Envious of all, hating Florestan most,
For he was gallant, strong, and debonair,
And favour'd most of Viola. When all
In hall assembled were, a chain she took
From her fair neck, and to Florestan gave

The precious gift, which, with his knight's chain, round
His neck he hung, so that the pledge of love 470
Sparkled in unison with knighthood's badge,
Won by his valor in the field of war.
Oh, too confiding maid ! thou'rt 'scap'd from hands
Base and impure, to fall into the net
The urchin sets ; for gratitude, when mix'd
With love, to maidens dang'rous is, and knights
That Templars are forswear the nuptial knot.
In surer ruin, maiden, dost thou fall ;
For courteous chivalry not long will wend
A meet companion for pure chastity. 480
When envious Guyon saw the pledge receiv'd,
His gauntlet from his wrist he drew, and cast,
In token of defiance, at the feet
Of Florestan, who stoop'd to take it up,
And then presented Guyon with his glove.
The matins scarce were rung, when arm'd in mail
The jealous champions on their coursers sprang.
Silent they rode tow'rds a sequester'd spot.
They chose their ground ; Guyon then bit his thumb
In token sure the combat was to death. 490
Florestan cross'd himself, and kiss'd the chain,
And pull'd his clasped vizor o'er his face.
Couching their lances both, they buried deep

Their spurs, and headlong ran a fierce career.
Resistless were Florestan's strength and weight,
At point of lance Guyon he tore from off
The saddle-tree ; so furious was the shock
He pitch'd him high in air, and on his neck
Down Guyon fell, which sudden snapp'd in twain.
He died without a groan. Florestan then 500
Back turn'd his courser's speed, and home he went
To kiss his lady's hand, and in her train
Enlist, conscious no rival hence to meet,
Resolv'd her service should be all his own.
Though in the hall no lack was there of knights
Courteous and blythe, yet none had prov'd so well
Their love ; no more with scorn or pride did she
Florestan treat ; subdued the maiden was,
And Cupid now had aim'd his shafts aright.
The conquer'd damsel own'd the deadly wound, 510
That now had pierc'd her heart and fix'd her fate.
Her swimming eyes did her soft heart reveal,
And conquer'd soon she sank, bewilder'd, lost,
Into Florestan's warlike arms, and sigh'd.
 Apart in lonely tower the peerless nymph
Hermione sat pond'ring o'er the feuds,
Or list'ning to the mild and plaintive strains
Drawn from Lucinda's harp, who strove to chace

Her cares away, and to her breast restore
Its wonted peace : with skilful hand she struck 520
The trembling strings, and sung of war, and feats
Of arms, and gentle ladies' love, of dwarfs,
And fairy tales, and Saracens and knights
Embattled in the Holy Land ; nor were
The deeds of Amadis forgot, the flower
Of knighthood, nor of Oriana, who,
Fairest of British royal dames, oft had
Prov'd e'en to death a constancy of love.
Of Lancelot and Palenore she sung,
King Arthur, with his table round, and peers 530
Of chivalry ; nor was Iberia's name forgot,
The land of fam'd romance, where Christian chiefs
With turban'd Moors were mix'd in mortal fight ;
Of magic, and of giants oft she told,
And faithful dwarfs who op'd the wicket low
At midnight hour, that ardent lovers then
Might creep unseen to ladies' secret bower.
She sang of what she knew not, for as yet
Love had not pierc'd Lucinda's timid breast.
Gentlest of gentle nymphs was she, and oft 540
Would sigh without a cause, nor dar'd she think
Of love, yet felt she still a void within
Her palpitating heart, that nought could fill.

Sometimes she thought the saintly veil to take,
But from her mistress ne'er could she resolve
To part ; soft friendship pure had knit their souls
In bonds indissoluble, and their thoughts
Most secret each unto the other joy'd
T' impart ; nor aught was there of cold reserve.
In that licentious court, and in the days 550
Of chivalry, where love was valor's meed,
A pearl of chastity Lucinda shone ;
And fiercest knights would meekly urge their suit
Unto the gentle maid, and jocund dames
With sneering envy ne'er could her assail.
All feuds she heal'd, and modesty would play
About her feet, and follow in her train,
Where'er her graceful footsteps mov'd, for all
Will virtue, modest without pride, revere.
As graceful lily in the shady dell, 560
With pallid cheek and downcast head, the type
Appears of modest beauty that's divine ;
So will a virgin fair appear, whose eyes
Seem veiled by their lashes long, and scarce
Dare throw a timid glance, ere they again
Are cast to earth ; while on the visage pale
A transient blush is seen, and straight is gone.
Pensive and sad Hermione still sat

From th' early rising to the setting sun ;
O'er the far plains she gaz'd, and when the day 570
Was cloth'd in sable robes, she sigh'd and sank
To wakeful slumber ; then at midnight rose
And to her chapel went ; prostrate before
The altar, there protection high implor'd,
And blessings on the League, and pardon crav'd
For her own sins ; for Buffa's influence foul
Was on the wane. Each day her heart to Heav'n
Was nigher drawn ; with fell remorse her soul
Was stung ; had Azzo's absence then been long,
Back to the cloister she a veiled nun 580
Might soon have gone ; with sighs, repentant all,
Exchang'd for virgin vows of holy love,
Which once had warm'd her artless breast ; but now
That breast, the seat alternate was of hope
Of joy to come, or late repentance sad.
One eve, ere sunset, had her practis'd eye
In the horizon a dark speck descried,
Which seem'd to move towards her, and soon she thought
She knew fleet Sudak, fleetier than the wind
That skims the plain, and soon she heard below 590
The sounding hoofs of his swift Arab horse
Resounding through the courts. Springing like foot
Of lynx, the sable dwarf flew up the stair,

That to the watch-tow'r led : the hideous imp,
With hands on forehead plac'd and bow profound,
Thus spoke ; " Before the hour of midnight strikes,
My lord and master will be here." She rose,
And emptied on his head a purse of gold.

This imp was born beyond where white men rove,
'Mid Afric's sands, and in the Holy War 600
Azzo had spar'd his life : faithful to him,
He was beyond compare, but to all else
Treach'rous with spite, as though his nurse had been
A serpent, and he thus had venom suck'd,
And she had round him coil'd, stinting his growth.
Scarce four feet high he stood, with shoulders broad
And bowed legs that could the hottest steed
Compress, until he would lie down, and drop
With sweat. His teeth seem'd ivory, and jet
Was his dark skin ; his eyes could every hue 610
Assume. So strong was he, and daring too,
By knees a giant he could seize, and tear
Him down, and, 'fault of weapons, then his teeth
In living flesh would meet. All deadly herbs
And plants he knew, either to slay or cure.
He could suck poison from a wound and spit
It out, so well 'gainst poison was he fenc'd :
Instinct he had like beast, and secret was

To death, which on the rack had proved been.
Philters, and charms, and love inspiring draughts, 620
(To ease the biting smart of aching love,)
Well could he form ; for magic arts he knew,
Well with his wily tongue could he beguile
The wedded dame, how such a knight or youth
Her favour sought, then jealousy impart
Unto her mate, then lull his fear at will.
No woman could his wily tongue resist ;
Although his hideous aspect shock'd her sight,
His serpent tongue could ever gain her ear.
Whene'er a woman met his eyes, she down 630
Would look and blush, for he would pour enough
Of guile into her ear, and her prepare
To fall his victim, who but chanc'd to please
Her eyes : he woke all her unconscious charms.
But his delight, that warm'd his cruel heart,
Was not so much to weave such nets as these,
Or husbands to beguile, and jealousy
'Twixt lovers sow, or maidens frail bewray,
As in the feats of war ; for well he knew
To mount the fiery steed, the jav'lin well 640
Could throw, and with an arrow hit a bird
On wing, and in full speed would shoot his shafts
Around, with aim unerring. At the back

Of Azzo walk'd or rode he, and his eyes
He fix'd on all who him approach'd. At night
He lay on leopard-skin across his door,
And then like mastiff he would rise and prowl
Through courts and galleries long, to see the watch
Were all alert, and mark who crept from bow'r
To bow'r. All dreaded the black imp, and all 650
His favour sought ; for he held good and ill
In equal balance in his wicked hands.
For spite is might e'en in a pigmy frame,
And all do fear the serpent's tooth, e'en more
Than lion's mouth, for deadly is the bite.

Hermione awoke as if from trance
Or dream ; returning joy infus'd its hue
O'er her pale cheek, and urg'd the rapid tide
Of blood, that swell'd her dark blue veins ; Health
Of Joy the sister, aye the call attends, 660
Fresh as the incens'd morn that breathes upon
The ruddy milk-maid, when afield she trips
Jocund, led gaily on by laugh and sport.
The castle now was quickly roused to mirth
And jollity : attir'd in gayest robes
Hermione, like Hebe, shone of health
The goddess and, of joy, as when she pours

The sparkling cup for Jove ; the rich repast
In her fair bower is laid ; soft music wafts
Its highest raptur'd notes from citron groves ; 670
Zephyr with flower of orange freighted now
Breathes o'er her swelling breast, where Azzo's cheek
Will soon repose ; small time had she for thought,
When in his warlike arms the hero clasp'd
The beauteous dame. " Oh, absence sweet," she cried,
" To bring such bliss as this ; ripe bliss ne'er felt
Before ; bliss now enjoying and enjoy'd,
Filling each mutual breast ; here coyness finds
No void in which to glide and check at once
The fulness of the whelming tide of love 680
And full blown hope, that to reality
Hath ripen'd now." No more she uttered then,
But sank, half swooning on his manly breast.
Azzo's hot blood was fir'd to joy intense.
Ever he liv'd in time that present was
Alone, and faint such mem'ries ever are ;
Time past doth fade with them full soon away ;
The morrow no existence hath until
It comes ; seldom it comes in sweet accord
With hope, and when it doth so come, it is 690
A crown to ev'ry joy. Of nature true,

Azzo the mirror was, in which herself
She saw : so powerful was within his breast
Her sense, no room was there for future or
For past ; the present dwelt in him, and he
Liv'd in the present, floating on the waves
Of actual life, heedless of all beside ;
The League, and Eccelino, and the war
Were chas'd from his hot soul away, that now
Love and Hermione alone had fill'd. 700
Sweet consolation this for all the ills
Of life ; two souls fused in one, one thought,
One being, one hope, one joy, divided now
In persons twain ; one overflowing soul
Floating between two young and glowing hearts,
Inspiring both alike, so mix'd in one,
No contrast could be found : useless are now
Words, or soft sighs, caresses bland, and looks,
That spring from other realms, where envy, hate,
Can never dwell ; no more Hermione 710
Could light up joy with passion-darting eyes ;
But they had melted into languor sweet,
So soft, so tender, and so pure, that now
Friendship did strive to fix his seat beside
Of warm desire, mellow'd by constancy.
Oh, Constancy ! thou dost unto long years

Moments of bliss prolong ; thou dost arrest
The rapid march of time ; and though the cheek
May fade, the accents of the tongue remain ;
The mild flame that around the constant heart 720
Still plays, sustains its glow, that beams through eyes
Less sparkling, though more pure, and mild, and kind.

END OF BOOK VI.

BOOK VII.

TH' IMPERIAL chief ascends the tow'ring height
Of Montcilici, Eccelino's guest ;
In that dread chamber is he lodg'd, whence fled
The spirit fell of Adelaide, who now
Her horrid influence gives to league the chief
With Eccelino firm. Now horrors quick
On horrors bubble up from Hell, and bubble through
The air, to witch mankind amaz'd ; tombs yawn
And open, sending forth their sheeted dead :
Red falling stars shoot fearfully athwart 10
The sky, and vapours dank play o'er the earth ;
Fevers become malign, and infants shriek
And die ; mad dogs now range the country through
Indent their foam on human flesh with sharp
Envenom'd teeth ; loves false and frail become,
And love-lorn maids in frenzy on the boughs
Of willows hang, beside the brooks, where beasts
Will never drink again ; here from her perch

The raven flaps her wing, and drives away
The nightingale ; the midnight thief now robs 20
Rich burghers of their store, and leaves them soak'd
In blood ; assassins prowl abroad, and hands
Murd'rous and foul on innocence are laid ;
The oaths of witnesses are false as vows
Of love, and judges oft condemn unheard.

All nature seems unhing'd, truth now is ta'en
For falsehood, and fell Tyranny is arm'd
In panoply, and to her pow'r is giv'n
To rule the earth : e'en tears have ceas'd to flow
For others' woes, for all humanity 30
Is gone, and devils prowl in human shapes.

Within the dreadful castle walls now sits
The conclave dire, and ere they try their force,
Est' to beguile they strive, whose brilliant name
Shines like the morning star, the only light
To guide the League of Lombardy : quick then
To him was sent a messenger to fix
A meeting with th' imperial chief ; in hope
By promise fair to gain him to their ends,
Or foul suspicion 'mongst his friends to sow. 40
Now ready and prepar'd for th' opening war
Was either side ; legion on legion soon
Thicken'd the dread array, when Est' was rous'd

From his fair mistress' arms at dead of night,
To hold high conference with the Swabian chief.
Alone and unarm'd both like true knights come;
For each to each had plighted knighthood's faith.

Far stretching from beyond Ravenna's town
An ancient wood of Roman pines outspread
'Their broad heads to the sky, and form'd a roof 50
Impervious to the sun, and shelter deep
Afforded from the southern rain, and threw
An awful gloom; and when the southern gale
Sweeps, lashing th' Adriatic into foam,
Its billows surging high, and rolling wild
O'er drifted sand, against the rugged feet
Of the deep-rooted pines oft spend their rage,
And dash the briny spray; landwards within
A heath extends, far as the eye can reach;
And here Ravenna stands, whose domes and spires 60
Circle, like kingly crown, its ancient brow,
And mark the tomb of great Theodoric.

In Merlin's cave an Empress' ashes lie,
Gallia Placida, virtue's ornament,
On whose imperial brow (its brightest gems!)
Beam'd their pure light, Faith, Hope, and Charity.
And here, deep homage have I paid thy shrine,
Dante! whose sacred ashes there repose,

By faction from thy native Florence driv'n.

Within this awful wood their meeting-place 70
Was fix'd ; no voice was heard, save the dull sound
Of the receding wave, or fitful moan
Of sea-breeze passing through the lofty pines.
Gay sails the monarch's gilded bark, and when
The lamp of night had climb'd Heav'n's loftiest arch,
He lands and mounts his steed, and to the spot
Agreed he wends his cautious way ; a glade
Open and wide, with hawthorn scatter'd here
And there : no presage of bad augury
Chill'd his warm blood, or bade him backward turn. 80

In silence Azzo leaves his castle walls ;
Hermione, now gay and jocund grown,
Strikes her light harp, and draws forth tend'rest strains
Attuned to her happy mood ; a lay
She sung, that might have ravish'd angels' ears ;
Nor had she ceas'd, when, as of mighty winds
The rush she hears, as if in angry mood
Rough Boreas from his prison had burst forth.
A clay-cold shiver shakes her troubled frame ;
Her dizzy sight an awful wonder then 90
Beholds, for Leonora's warning shade
Before her stands, stern as a matron grave
Of ancient Rome, when stoic Cato rul'd

With rod severe the state. Her hand aloft
The spectre held, and, pointing to the sky,
Hermione she thus address'd: "Fair maid,
That art beguil'd, entangled in the net,
The evil mesh of hell, let Est' beware,
And shun the meeting with th' imperial chief;
Prostrate before thine altar, quick implore 100
Protection of high Heav'n, t'avert the sad
Disgrace that on him soon must fall: 'tis Heav'n
Alone that can him now protect." She spoke,
And in a dreadful rush of hissing winds
She disappear'd. Down fell Hermione
On bended knees, with hands in terror clasp'd;
As if by livid lightnings blasted through,
She look'd a gazing statue, cold as stone,
With horror stamp'd, and fix'd in speechless trance.
Sudden the wind subsided and, then left 110
A dreadful calm on all around—on all
Save only on that damsel's harrow'd soul:
The warm blood froze that circled from her cheek
Back to her heart, and left it deadly pale.
But soon love chas'd her fear away; love was
The master-passion of her soul, that fear,
So terrible and wild, could not e'en quench.
She rose, and straight unto her chapel flew,

And prostrate at the altar falling, pour'd
Her fervent soul with ardour yet unfelt. 120
Oh happy state, thus drawn from all around,
The soul itself doth now invigorate
At the font, drinking of Almighty pow'r.

As, Milton! bard sublime, that sings the ways
Of Providence, and how the serpent brought
Sin and all ills, and lost us paradise;
We wander forth in care, in toil, and pain,
To meet with ghastly death (oft death in sin),
And thus to hang 'twixt good and ill, ever
Uncertain which may fall on our frail frames; 130
Ah, dreadful state! uncertain if we soar
To Heav'n, or headlong fall in fiery gulf
Of hell, and in eternal tortures groan.

On the black heath, and towards the forest turn'd,
The generous Est' spurs on his courser hard.
As he is pricking o'er the dreary plain,
Sudden th' enchantress Buffa at his side
Appears, and, bounding like a ball, on him
Glares with her baleful eyes, and chatters loud.
Full fifteen feet she clears at every spring; 140
No horse so fleet could from her strides escape.
On to the forest verge she bounds, to catch
The snakes, and cull the deadly herbs, the broth

Of hell to make, and sprinkle Est', and once
 Again beguile. From underneath a pine
 She sprang, and stopp'd his foaming courser short ;
 But then the prayers of fair Hermione
 Were heard. Loud from the Appennine the peal
 Of thunder roar'd, and the fork'd lightning flash'd ;
 The witch was shiver'd through ; then with the bolts
 Heav'n sent, quick she was doubled up beneath
 Th' affrighted courser's feet, and breathing flames
 From nostril and from mouth, " Now cursed be
 " Thy father's son," she, muttering, sank ; and straight
 She lay a heap of ashes, that the gale,
 Soon scattering to the winds of Heav'n, dispers'd.
 Dark clouds o'erspread the moon, and Azzo sank
 In drowsy sleep ; and when he woke, he heard
 The matin note of birds, and the blythe horn
 Of huntsman, now a-field, chasing the deer. 160
 The Emp'ror soon had gain'd his bark, nor wist
 He how, and sail'd, led by the hand of fate.
 Now Heav'n-protected Est' unto the dame
 Returns, whose fervent piety had sav'd
 From the deep stain, ne'er to be wash'd away,
 The name of an apostate, vermin vile,
 Of all that crawl the earth the most accurst.
 To her fond arms Azzo returns with joy ;

With conscious pride, Hermione now feels
Her pow'r; e'en in the gentlest breast will pow'r 170
Rush in and hidden lie; and when the tale
She told, confounded, mute the warrior was:
He who the field could brave, back shrunk with fear
From the appalling visions she had seen.
A pious horror seiz'd his trembling limbs,
When Leonora he had heard once more
Had earth revisited; with fear, with shame,
With love oppress'd, confus'd, alarm'd, then sunk
The haughty chief, subdu'd, upon her breast:
For he the talisman had prov'd, that had 180
His destinies controll'd, to evil now
And then to good. 'Tis thus on earth man seems
A balance to bestride; attractive powers
Draw him to either side; evil, as well
As good, hath his inheritance still been;
And women oft the magnets are, that will
Draw him each way; for man doth fear whate'er
He loves; and, through his senses, woman oft
His willing soul doth master, rule, control.
The trumpet soon proclaims the opening war; 190
And brilliant shone in this high troubled scene
The Est', with grace adorn'd, and with the fire
Of eagle in his eye, and eagle's strength

Of wing, that far aloft could soar, and then,
With force resistless, pounce upon his prey.
“ On Mantua is the march,” he cried ; “ advance
In Mantua’s friendly walls ; the women all,
And treasure, safe shall be ; and then we take
The field to meet the haughty Montferrat,
Who, by forc’d marches, now on Parma moves, 200
To carry, sword in hand, the town ; him, with
The League, I join, and then our fortunes try
Against the foe. May God now speed the Church,
The League, and Liberty !” Loud shouts arose
That through the castle rung ; the warlike steeds,
Pawing in stall, neighing, return’d the cry ;
The falcons scream’d upon the beams, and clapp’d
Their wings ; the hounds in kennel all were rous’d,
And howl’d as if at furious bay ; each breast
Of wife or mother heav’d ; each heart sunk low, 210
And briny tears trickled adown their cheeks.
“ To horse, to horse !” was now the cry : the knights
Sprang with their ringing harness on their steeds ;
Unfurl’d the pennons stream ; and at the sound
Of trumpets loud, champing their foaming bits,
The fiery coursers clatter forth amain,
And rapid wheel with evolution true,
Cov’ring the line of march, on which proceeds

The convoy slow. In the midst Hermione,
On litter sad reclin'd, with streaming eye 220
Takes leave of her fair bower of love and joy.
She leaves behind citron and orange groves,
And fragrant arbour, thick festoon'd with flow'rs,
And rich enamel'd lawns, sparkling cascades,
And shady groves, tuneful with cheerful note
Of birds' eternal chorus sang to spring,
When first her gay embroidery she shows.
Oh, Spring! the woodland choristers thee hail
With song: thou wear'st Hope's livery; green is
Thy virgin robe; for thou and she art one; 230
And budding Spring doth Hope personify.
Spring, bearing Nature's hymeneal torch,
That fires each living heart, rekindles life;
From her delights Hermione now flew.
She dwelt in nature; simple, pure were all
Her feelings; in succession each would rise,
Mov'd by the objects that around her were.
No grace can charm a woman's heart like this;
Her type is then the rose, refresh'd with dews
Of early morn; she glows expanding in 240
The noon-tide sun, then droops; but soon refresh'd
By dewy eve, her fragrance is restor'd.
But now, alas! all these she leaves; pure rills,

And grot impervious to the sun's hot rays ;
She quits at once the placid haunts of love,
Where she a goddess reign'd ; no more for her
The lofty harp is strung in joy ; no more
The light guitar, by black-ey'd nymph from Spain,
In seguidillo gay, or Moorish dance
With castanettes : in Azzo's court these were ; 250
For graceful revels e'er delighted him.
No more for her the splendid banquet is
Prepar'd ; nor the sweet sylvan chase is heard,
With hound and horn ; nor tow'ring falcon's flight.
Oh, Peace, thou'rt ill exchange'd for horrid war,
Cities besieg'd, tumult, and wounds, and death,
And famine stalking o'er the lifeless land,
Captives immur'd in dungeons deep, fierce feuds
And jealousies 'mongst rival chiefs that spring,
And treason foul, hiss'd forth by vipers coil'd 260
In the confiding breast ; all these she goes
To meet, and the impending horrors dread
Of conquer'd land ; from these there's no escape
But through kind Death, our latest refuge oft,
And kindest friend, who his black scarf doth draw
O'er our afflicted eyes. Such were the dark
And melancholy thoughts, that ever now
Brooded within Hermione's sad soul ;

Ere through the lofty gate of Mantua
She pass'd, and from her reveries awoke, 270
She heard the loud acclaims : " God speed the League,
The Church, and Liberty ! God speed our Chief !"
From casement and from balcony was heard,
And echo'd louder by the crowds beneath,
Louder than e'en the troubled ocean's surge.
When Azzo's name she heard, her love was calm'd ;
By love and pride in turns her soul was sway'd.

Ere midnight bells had chim'd, a squire at speed
Rode to the Parma gate, and hail'd the watch ;
" From the Montferrat I come ; quickly lower 280
The bridge, and to me ope the gate, and lead
To Est' : " quick this behest by the port-guard
Was granted ; soon he stood in presence high
Of Azzo, Captain of the League ; his knee
He bended low. " God save thee, val'rous knight !"
He said, " who bear'st the bleeding cross upon
Thy generous breast ; from the Montferrat now
I rode ; from snow-topp'd Alps he ran a race,
Rapid as hungry wolves at Christmas tide,
When fleecy flocks seek shelter in the plain ; 290
On Parma straight we march'd, ten leagues a day
Or more ; our rear by nought encumber'd was ;
No tents, no baggage ; then we slept a-field,

Fed upon what we found ; and yester eve
In sight of Parma's dome we came ; without
A halt the barricade we storm'd off hand,
And enter'd then the town with sword at throat
Of foe ; so hot and fresh our soldiers were.
Montferrat could not there his prowess shew,
As he was wont ; nor could his brawny arm 300
Hew knights from helm to saddle-tree ; on foot
He charg'd ; as with his left hand down he tore
The pallisade, with his good right he cleft
A churl from shoulder to the haunch, who dar'd
Oppose his way. The town was sack'd, and foes
Were pass'd on point of sword. Montferrat thus
Greets Est', and hails him Captain of the League ;
Ready he is forces with him to join,
And guard this hither bank of Po." His chain
Round the squire's neck now Azzo hung, and bid 310
Him go to rest, that ere noon-day he might
Return, and greet from him the Montferrat.
He was a lordly captain ; proud he was,
Of high birth, prowess, and of courage firm,
That reckless brav'd all danger : rash in youth
He'd been ; but now, in middle age, more calm.
No chief in the tumultuous fray more prompt
To remedy a fault than he, or seize

The moment when to strike ; his blow was hard ;
Alert and vigilant he only was 320
Second to Eccelino ; for as yet
Azzo, untried, had nought but promise given.
In peace Montferrat's chief delight was found ;
In boist'rous revelry, his manners rough,
Unbending were, and lack'd of courtesy.

Meanwhile, the League assembled was in camp
Near Parma ; Azzo from his courser sprang
Into Montferrat's arms ; most kindly both
Embrac'd, and to the tent retir'd ; high cares
Absorb'd their thoughts ; they knew Romano then 330
Had cross'd the Po, and far advanc'd in front,
To aid the passage of th' imperial chief ;
Nor could they him forestall, so tardy came
The legions of the League : the Swabian host
With Eccelino's force united was.

In front of Parma Azzo's tents were pitch'd ;
In each chieftain's heart were now balanc'd fear
And hope. Courage and chivalry shone in
Their ranks ; five thousand knights they counted well,
And patriot bands from towns : yet no array 340
Like to Romano's could they shew ; none like
The Emp'ror's war-worn host ; no chief had they
That with the chief of Padua might compete.

Of fiery youths and brilliant knights, enough
Their gorgeous ranks, undisciplin'd, could boast ;
Each city her unruly bands pour'd forth,
Whom mad sedition first to arms had train'd :
Of wildest anarchy their camp the scene ;
Their troubadours, as if in peaceful court,
Caroll'd their songs of gentle love or war. 350
These feasts and revelry in booth or tent,
With courtezans in rich apparel dight,
Were rife, and orgies, ending oft in blows,
Where wine and blood in purple stream unite.
Such was the army of the League, where nought,
Save courage high, o'erflow'd, and desperate hate
Of tyrant's rule. Barefooted friars through
The wide camp ran, with zeal exhorting all
For the blest cross to die, and relics hung
About the soldiers' necks. Now were their arms 360
Bright polish'd, and their swords were whet, and bows
New strung ; with deadly spite all waited then
The foes' approach, whose legions silent march'd
In dread array, of victory secure.
The scouts that scour'd the country round, dismay'd,
Pour'd in, and spread wild rumours through the camp ;
And in the afternoon small bands of horse
Return'd, with many a fresh and gaping wound,

As, here and there, o'er the wide plain they reel'd,
Like drunken men, and one by one dropp'd in. 370
Azzo arose, and from the camp he rode
To view the field ; far as his eye could reach
Wreaths of thick smoke he saw, that slowly rose
From barus and homesteads fir'd ; fir'd by the foe,
That so his troops no lurking place might find.
The sun had nearly set, when the dark night
Was lighted up by fires, that stretch'd a league
In front, and mark'd where the confederate host
Outstretch'd ; for now, advanc'd from either front,
A thin and scatter'd line of posts is plac'd, 380
Clust'ring in every shed or grove ; patrols,
Friendly or hostile, frequent meet ; the word
Is ready on their lips ; anxious they wait
The break of day ; in either camp the hosts
Are sunk in sleep ; sound be it, for to some
'Tis the last sleep, they wake to sleep no more
In life, and many, ere the morrow's sun
Shall set, the portal dread will pass of death ;
Many will live, but maim'd with horrid wounds,
Bearing a life of misery and woe. 390
The fiery ordeal all must pass ; and they
To whom 'tis giv'n to 'scape, their brows, perchance,
With deathless wreaths may crown ; and fame inscribe

In the high skies their name with quenchless fire ;
Still many briny tears will flow down cheeks
Of orphans, widows ; youth, of promise high,
Shall be mow'd down like grass, that springeth up
And straight is cut, and trampled under foot
To rot. Hide from my sight of war, alas !
This sad alternative, and let me then 400
View but bright glory, blazing like the sun
At noon, that leads the steps of liberty !
Lest, in the argument I hold, I fail.
Clio, forgive, if I forget the names
That shone or fell on that great day. Inspire
My song, dread Mars, to tell, in warlike strain,
The glorious feats thy votaries achiev'd !
Stretch'd in his tent Azzo lay lock'd in sleep,
No terrors enter'd his firm soul ; his heart
Unconscious was of fear ; the sun shot down 410
His rays on him, ere he had op'd his eyes.
Soon he arose, and snuff'd the morning gale ;
With spirit light, and heart as free as though
He rose to chase the nimble deer : his knights
Around him crowd, partaking his repast.
In goblet deep, of ruddy wine he drinks,
" Success attend our arms ; " all pledge the draught.
His brilliant panoply soon buckled on,

His proud plume waves upon his burnish'd helm,
White and carnation mix'd : this is his high 420
Distinctive mark as Captain of the League.
About his neck his talisman he wore,
Hermione's blest beads, which she had giv'n,
His vict'ry's guerdon, when, in mortal fight,
In Milan's lists he stood ; these, with the cross,
Were his sole badge : lightly he vaulted in
His seat. Twelve barbed steeds, of purest race,
Were led by twelve young squires of noble blood ;
Then follow'd close his body-guard, all knights
Well tried ; these by the stout Florestan led. 430
Before him went twelve silver trumpets ; each,
Blazon'd with splendid bannerol, gave forth
A point of war, and told, in flourish deep,
The chief's approach. Along the line he pass'd,
Greeted with loud acclaims ; graceful he bow'd ;
His captain's truncheon oft aloft he wav'd.
Stern in the centre, proud as noble oak,
The Montferrat now stood, ready to lead
Or to receive the shock. Scatter'd in front,
In bands of few, the cross-bow archers came ; 440
Of Genoa they, tough mountaineers, and well
They knew their craft : in centre firm were plac'd
The stout Romagnols, and their brawny arms

Bore the dread axe, whose deadly force and weight
Nought could resist ; they were by Roman spears,
Nigh-hand, sustain'd. Five thousand mailed knights
The rest composed, a brilliant chivalry
That all in this vast field outshone, as doth
The sun outshine the stars ; glorious they were
Beyond compare ; their veins the best blood fill'd 450
That Italy could boast ; most prompt were they
To bleed for vengeance and for liberty,
So free, and bold, and high their courage seem'd !
Revenge within their bosoms ever burn'd
With quenchless flames, for brothers, kinsmen, friends,
In cruel dungeons barr'd or doom'd to death.

Where now could sight more gorgeous meet the eye ?
Of fiery steeds richly caparison'd,
Of shields with many a high device enwrought,
Swords temper'd well as those Damascus boasts, 460
Lances, of every colour, varnish'd clear,
With streamers floating in the wind, whose hues
Of every mingled colour, of each knight
The sentiments declar'd, on whose high helm
Shone every bird and beast in nature found,
Or in heraldic fancy : griffins, snakes,
And dragons, sculptur'd in barbaric gold,
Eagles, and falcons, and the threat'ning front

Of bull, wrought and inlaid with wondrous craft :
Plumes of the ostrich nodding high, and hair 470
Of horses' manes, red, black, and green, and gilt.
Knights bronz'd by war, with snow white beards that flow'd
Over their mail; knights gallant with the hue
Of rosy youth, boasting the pledges given
Of ladies' love, a glove, a veil, or scarf,
Or garter, clasp'd around their wrist, the lance
Or sword to grasp more firm? Then breath'd aloud
The warlike harmony from hautboys, fife,
And clarion screaming high, and kettle-drum,
And clashing cymbal. Est' now pass'd the lines: 480
Dismounted, soon his knights, stretch'd on the ground,
Patient await the moment; when, like flash
Of lightning, darting through the summer sky,
Down they may pour, to blast the hostile ranks.
In them th' avenging spirit of a land
Insulted and besieg'd, embodied was;
Which soon would flash with deadly flame, from point
Of sword and lance; of tyrants' blight the hope.

Ere the shrill cock had woke the tardy morn,
Ere that the ruddy streaks in sky announc'd 490
Aurora's car's approach; while sable Night,
With her broad wings encompass'd half the earth,
Romano, full of care, arose; by lamp

He plann'd the fight, and weigh'd each chance within
His anxious breast. He was to lead the fight.
On him the Swabian chief the care repos'd
Of his embattled host ; but still he chose,
Imperial like, to ride from rank to rank,
T' encourage and reward. On Padua's chief
The care of captain fell. By the faint light 500
Of day's first dawn, ere the sun's rays had beam'd
To chase the night away, harness'd complete,
His steed he mounted ; and, surrounded by
His chosen knights, far to the front he mov'd.
To catch the earliest gleam of arms, that flash'd
From th' adverse host ; their battle well to scan,
And to survey his level columns move,
In order most exact, from camp. Martial
And grand, their steady movements were ; they march'd
Like Greeks of old, of whom their minstrels sung ; 510
They seem'd as if the gods had with their step
Endow'd them. O'er the plain the army thus
Mov'd on, and quick in firmest phalanx form'd ;
Silent, save their slow tread, and clear commands
That flew from rank to rank, repeated loud.
As wasps in summer, with a bitter pang,
Assail and sting, circle and buzz, and fly,
Now here, now there, sometimes in thickest swarm

Then single, come, so did the Tyrolese
Cover the plain ; the tough yew-bow with twang 520
Sent forth its deadly shafts ; but sharper still
The nimble Genoese repel the swarm :
The cross-bow surer hits, and many a corse
Lies stiffen'd, up and down. Now hath the sun
High ris'n, and shines upon the banquet thus
Prepar'd for death ; havoc, thrice glorious, here,
As erst at Padua, mounts her gory car.

Upon the plain the order'd legions march ;
Forests of spears uprear'd on either side.
'Gainst the main battle of the foe himself, 530
Romano now his first assault directs :
Fierce to the onslaught thousands drive, who pour
Their blood in torrents for his will ; for his
Stern presence is command : where'er he moves
The conflict thickens, fiercer blows the storm ;
Against the Montferrat impression makes.
Wild is the din of arms, and of his bands
The outcry is, " Long live the Emperor !
Down, rebels down !" Shrill shouts of vengeance come
From th' adverse ranks ; the furious Romagnol 540
Rushes to the affray with beamy axe
And mace ; his hands are stain'd with German gore,
That flows, to moisten the parch'd plain, and give

The grapes a redder hue. On either flank
Romano's legions pierce, and bear down there
The townsmen of the League. Azzo now bids
The Roman spears advance ; more dubious then
Success doth hang, balanc'd in equal scales.
Dreadful the conflict there, for not one foot
The haughty Roman deigns to flee, or turn 550
His head. "Forwards !" exulting, now exclaims
Montferrat, standing o'er his slaughter'd steed
When disentangled, soon again he mounts ;
By furious push of pike, five hundred steps
He gains ; there, crowding in a heap around,
Romano's legions stand ; but whose quick eye
Soon saw how to arrange the misform'd mass.
Quick to his horse he flew, to lead them on ;
Four thousand horse of his, more of the chiefs,
Were in the field ; no knights were in body 560
Found, but scatter'd among the men at arms.
Earth trembled 'neath their rapid feet, as they
Came shouting on : nor could the eye their line
Master ; nought but the bravest hearts could now
Withstand the shock, and drive the billow back
Of this, the fiercest blast of war's dread storm.
Oh, piteous sight, to see ten thousand horse

Sweep o'er th' encumber'd plain, on all sides throng'd
With dying or with wounded men ! piteous
To hear their moans ! Surging 'gainst the phalanx 570
Of Roman spears, now form'd in firm squares, down
This sweeping torrent flows ; but, as the pier
Resists the angry wave that chafes, while safe
Light vessels 'neath it are moor'd or fix'd close,
So safe is this firm battle of the League.
Before the rows of spears whole ranks of steeds
And riders fall, and form a rampart high
With wrecks of arms. Still Eccelino tries
His force ; with charge repeated, charge on charge,
With blows successive, must at last succeed. 580

Now Est' comes forth to tear in twain the wreath
Of Vict'ry, which the goddess, tow'ring o'er
Their heads, alternate holds for each to seize :
His tempest-stirring soul rous'd all around ;
With graceful hand he held the reins to guide
His steed ; impetuous then he scour'd the plain
In rapid rounds, well order'd all his host,
Ere they should headlong plunge upon the foe,
And join the battle with a hideous crash.
Again his fury glows, impatiently 590
To snatch the triumph from his rival's grasp ;

His leading truncheon high in air he throws,
And draws his sword ; advancing to the front,
Flies now to meet or to repel the shock.
All eyes on him are fix'd with wonderment,
And every bosom beats with kindred zeal ;
His soul now rush'd into his mighty arm,
And swift he wheel'd around the Roman flank,
With his resplendent chivalry to set
The field in blaze ; their sparkling armour shone 600
From 'neath the dusky wreaths of rising dust,
And in the dim clouds flash'd ; fleetier than stags
They bounded in the fight, and bite their foes
With an envenom'd gripe ; and as the rough
And sinewy mountaineer, with rapid blows
That echo through each rock and vale, fells fast
The cracking pines ; so they laid on a load
Of blows, which flakes of fire sent all around :
Like pines the foemen fall ; horrid the din
Of war resounds : horrid the falchions stream ; 610
Sweating with gory drops, lances here pierce
Through armour ; there their broken staves fly up
In air ; horse upon horse now tumbling comes,
And armour rings upon the sounding ground ;
Banners and pennons roughly seized are,

And knights from saddle pluck'd by crested helm.
Azzo and Eccelino each on each
Do call: as oft two proud galleys, when the North
Doth crack his cheeks with rage, still strive to join
And grapple with main force, in vain; the wave 620
Rises between them both, and both fall off;
So now these Captains fierce and proud were each
Drifted apart; so full and fierce now rose,
The crossing currents high; so well was fought
The desp'rate fight by either furious host.

True as to death both party fought, nor ask'd
For ransom or for quarter; no slackness
Was here now found, except from breathless steeds
And broken arms; but fierce defiance clos'd
Many a lip in death; and e'en in death 630
The champions of the League defiance frown'd.
Vengeance and high disdain were, ruthless, stamp'd
On stiff'ning corse, of its proud spirit reft;
The parting life had left its courage there.
Alas! the soul from the frail frame must part,
Glorious to part in war for liberty.
Romano's broken legions quick are now
Reform'd; they stand in squares across the plain;
His host then rally in their rear, and Est'

Calls back his knights, and draws them up in line, 640
Each on the other gazing. Till the sun
Had sunk, both armies stand, and then to camp
Silent retire in unmolested march.

'Tis over, spirits of the immortal slain
Ye are fled ! spirits that earth's lightning blaz'd,
That flash'd and shed around your glorious light !
Ages that flash endures, and fresh it streams
Within each memory of kindred souls.
On earth such glory dies not ; can it then
Extinguish'd be in Heav'n ? Great souls are not 650
Form'd in an instant ; and shall thus their blaze
An instant only last, and so be quench'd ?
Justice such disproportion'd sacrifice
Forbids ; nor would th' heroic soul aspire
To the high stars, unless itself it felt
Kindred with their conscience ; the echo thou
Of the Almighty's voice ! thou whisper'st us
That earth-won laurels change into a crown
Eternal ; on earth the spiral cypress points
Its gloomy cone, to mark where we have found 660
Our sepulchre, in sculptur'd tomb, that's carv'd
With fretted frieze of marble or of brass.
Say then, is this glory's sole guerdon ? No :

For thus the fiery steed might honour'd be,
Whom his hot rider on the lance doth drive.
Departed spirits of the slain ! ye're fled :
And though your ghastly forms are left below,
You hover still in th' empyrean sky ! 668

END OF BOOK VII.

BOOK VIII.

THE trump of fame now sounded loud ; its blast
All Italy had rous'd, for or against
The League. Down to the depths of dungeons sank
Its cheering sound ; fresh life infus'd 'mid chains ;
It warm'd their sickly blood and flush'd their cheeks,
With hope. From Mincio's flowing wave unto
The Rhætian Alps, the Guelphs were rous'd ; and soon
Rumour, still busy with her hundred tongues,
From group to group quick flew, and ev'ry eye
Told tales without assistance of the tongue. 10
At Trent, in church, were chanted joyful hymns
Unto the Lord of Hosts ; the alarm bells loud
Then peal'd ; as late in Gaul the tocsin rung,
The people flock'd, and, with the voice of God,
Exhorted by their prelate, loud exclaim'd,
“ Down, tyrant, down ! ” From steeples high, and domes,
Stream'd in the wind the ensign of revolt.
Fierce as the raging sea, roll'd to and fro

The eddy current of the populace ;
And hov'ring o'er their heads the blazing sword 20
Wav'd in her right Brescia, Verona ; each
City, oppress'd, op'd wide her gates, and threw
The clanking chains in anger to the ground.
The shepherds and the husbandmen all rush'd
T' embrace the citizens ; no thought had they
Of bleating flocks, and oxen now afield ;
All brothers seem'd restor'd to health and life ;
For liberty is health and life ; and worse
Than dismal death are chains. Oh, rush to death,
Nations that are enslav'd and trodden down ! 30
Now man his best prerogative asserts,
Gazing, with front erect, on the bright stars
That seem the way to brightest Heav'n to shew ;
Tramples his riven chains beneath his foot,
And spurns usurping rule ; his dagger draws ;
On one knee bent, he holds aloft its keen
And cutting edge, and calls on God its use
To sanctify, and bid the stream of gore
To flow from tyrants' satellites ; its smoke
Ascending from th' insulted earth, doth now 40
A grateful sacrifice appear, to sooth
Afflicted Virtue, mourning in black weeds,
With wreath of cyprus crown'd, and tearful eye,

That's fix'd on earth ; but now, at Freedom's sight,
Virtue, from her curs'd trammels loos'd, inspires
Each breast : the storm hath burst, the billows roll
Of the full tide of war, and from each town,
Surging, they cover far and wide the plain ;
Flowing, they gather fresh resistless force.
Such was of Freedom the advancing march : 50
Rous'd from its slumb'rous rest, enchain'd by hell.

Pale terror stalk'd through the imperial ranks,
Save Eccelino, all were terror struck.
He paus'd ; calmly he saw rebellion's flag
Glare like a meteor in the midnight sky ;
More victims still he doom'd to cruel death.
Swift from th' imperial camp he sped away ;
Sudden before Bassano then appears
To urge the siege. Its brave defender falls ;
Starts from her grief his widow'd dame ; aloft 60
She holds his sword, and kneeling o'er his corse,
Still bleeding, with Heav'n's aid herself devotes ;
On Heav'n she calls to strengthen her weak arm ;
With horror and with anguish is her heart
Congeal'd, and 'neath her spouse's crested helm
Her hair dishevell'd waves ; the big tear stands
In her dark glaz'd eye, nor doth she hear
The din of war, nor restless cry of foe.

Mounting the breach, a blazon'd shield now beams
On her left arm ; into the fray she springs, 70
Such as Thalestris, when the conqueror
Of Persia's realms she sought, in hopes by him
To rear a warlike race. Far other thoughts
Bianca Rossi had on that dread day ;
She sought, with vengeful steel and deadly dart,
The tyrant ; onwards rushing to the breach,
She deals around blows of despair and death ;
Frantic, her screams pierce e'en the horrid din ;
She bares her snow-white bosom to the fight.
Death often lifts his dart, but pitying draws 80
It back ; Fate hath ordain'd her life to fall
A nobler sacrifice ; with arms in hand
She's seiz'd, and when the dreadful rush is o'er,
Unto Romano then the dame is brought.
Though all unus'd to love, his gaze is fix'd ;
Enamour'd, on her form his baleful eyes
With hot desire 'gan gloat ; her blood-stain'd hand
He takes ; her matron chastity he dares
In midst of wounds and death. Sudden she springs
From the high casement to the reeking street 90
Below, and dislocates her tender limbs :
On the fair prize he's bent, and surgeons bids
By art medicinal, her cure attempt.

Again before the tyrant she is brought,
Bound with silken cords. Bianca's turn'd adrift,
Insulted and dishonour'd ! through the world
To stray and weep ! She flew unto the tomb
Of her lov'd spouse, to whom she had as wife
So faithful prov'd ; in it she plung'd, and with
Heroic heart, and hand upon her head, 100
She pull'd the slab, and, crush'd beneath the weight,
Expir'd ; and out of tyrant's reach afar,
Her glorious spirit fled ever to rest !

Rapid o'er rugged rocks and pathless tracks,
Th' impetuous tyrant flew ; his shatter'd bark
Was toss'd on whirlpool eddies of revolt.
On every side his harass'd troops now march ;
Like Hannibal, 'gainst rising hosts he stood
Dauntless ! like Hannibal, the more oppress'd,
The higher still he rose ! Dread in his van, 110
And thirsty vengeance hover'd in his rear !

In pow'r the tyrant now had plac'd his slave :
Ansedesio, the minister accurst
Of tyrant's vengeance, pander to his lust,
O'er the sad conquer'd cities now presides.
Terrors disturb his rest, and cank'ring hate
Hath gangren'd all his heart ; no thrill doth rouse
His stupor, save the shriek from anguish wrung,

Of some o'er-tortur'd victim of his wiles ;
Or when the rack disjoins the quiv'ring frame, 120
And groans re-echo through the hollow vaults ;
Or when he smiling sees the father's woe,
And widow's, orphan's tears gush o'er their cheeks,
With agony convuls'd, and views their hands
Clasp'd in despair : his dearest pastime this,
This his delight, that brings to life his heart,
Gangren'd from hate of life that will not crawl ;
Life that does scorn to kiss the feet of pow'r,
Who tramples under foot man's dearest rights ;
For such we still behold stern Tyranny 130
Frown like a giant on mankind, whilst high
In air he brandishes his massy club,
A lofty pine, pluck'd from the shaggy side
Of Alpine hill. Like the Cyclopien king,
He feeds on human flesh : rocks hurling on
His rivals' heads ; and, like dire Polypheme,
E'en in the sea his victims hot pursues.
But, like the wily Grecian chief, arise,
Ye brave ! put out his dreadful eye, that glares
On all both far and near ; then fear shall seize 140
The monster ; wandering on in darkness, he
Shall reel, and, stumbling, fall an easy prey.
Twelve thousand victims, Padua, hast thou seen

Perish within thy walls ; in dungeons, some
Never again beheld the light ; and some
Were bound, and limb from limb by horses dragg'd ;
Many expir'd in flames, and more have died
In new unheard of tortures ; many a hall,
Reft of its gallant lord, deserted stands ;
And through the lonely walls pale ghosts are seen 150
To flit at midnight's hour. No banner streams ;
No warder's call is heard ; nor clatt'ring hoof
Of steed ; nor brilliant chivalry, to pay
Homage to ladies fair ; but in the courts,
Grass-grown, the wild fox finds his lurking place.
Mute is the shepherd's reed ; nor doth the clown
Carrol his blithesome song afield, nor sport
With black-ey'd maids ; they wildly gaze, and heave
The sympathetic sigh. On Brenta's shore
How many a villa now dismal stands, 160
Weeping the joyless home, where late the voice
Was heard of lute and harp, and thrill was felt
That rosy pleasures bring ; there seems to live
The piteous memory of the tortur'd dead ;
And still remembrance of the happy past
Inflicts a deeper pang in the still hours
Of present anguish, and of mourning deep.
And ye, sad victims of a jealous rule,

Now do you sigh, banish'd to foreign lands,
And waste the joyous days that Nature gives, 170
The days of joy and home ! Your tears fast flow,
Far from your native soil ; your social hearths,
Your social fabric, all pull'd down ; your wives
And children scatter'd wide abroad, and now
Sickening at the sun's light ; no more can ye
Enjoy with them : your hair is bleach'd ; wrinkles
With grief are furrow'd, and your sad hearts droop.
Hard doom, that steals away in anguish deep
Your precious days ; your breath escapes in sighs
Breath'd to the unrelenting walls, that nought 180
Can feel, and none around will sympathize ;
But your deep throbbing heart, that beats against
Your side, bounds o'er the walls to beat among
Your kindred and your friends ; an instant will
It leap to 'scape, and then, like lead, it falls,
Torpid, benumb'd, again into your tomb,
That holds both life and death ; or rather death
Conscious of life, tremendous, awful doom !
Life, by the sun unwarm'd, unconscious still
Of being life ; by the fresh breath unfann'd 190
Of Spring, hugging cold chains, the garland that
An impious tyrant weaves to honour thus
Bright virtues. Is there no avenging steel,

That Heav'n would sanctify, to plunge in deep
Each adamant heart, that dares this guilt ?

Now thirsty vengeance its deep draughts had drunk
Rapid ; and yet, in Eccelino's heart

No rest was found ; onwards to Mantua's tow'rs
He press'd, to crush the strong hold of the League.

In search of conquest had the Swabian chief 200

Advanc'd, climbing the vine-clad Tuscan hills

Of jocund Bacchus, trusting to divide

And rule the crafty Florentines (for Guelphs

They were) : Est' cover'd now Romania's fields,

Whilst Montferrat, with his brave legions, rush'd

Within the lofty walls of Mantua.

The timid burgher saw, with joy, pour through

The crowded streets the sun-burnt legions ; they,

With haughty tread, from Parma came ; the dust

Had dimm'd the brightness of their arms, but health

And strength gave brightness to their sparkling eyes ;

They in the front of Parma's fight had stood :

Anxious they were again to meet the foe ;

Anxious again to rouse the din of war.

Now Mantua an ant-hill seem'd ; the hum

Of warlike business rose, like distant sound

Of morning tides. In ditch, or on the wall,

Clung thousands to their labour ; the loud lash

Resounded through the street ; waggons drew on
Their lengthen'd train, discharging heavy loads ; 220
Forage is pil'd, and sacks of flour are heap'd
To serve th' expected siege ; the bellowing ox
Encumbers now the way ; and flocks, and herds,
Are penn'd where chance directs ; the lofty halls
And banquet rooms, now hospitals become,
Soon with a banquet shall be spread for death ;
And round the city walls the young tendrils
Of graceful vine are rooted up, and thrown
As fodder ; to the foot the axe is laid
Of spreading beech, or shady elm, or broad 230
And leafy sycamore, and flow'ring lime ;
Down fall the shady walks about the town ;
Naked black walls and towers frown haughtily
Defiance on the land. Like the rough rocks
That rear their dark and savage heads on shore
Of Lusitania, where dark Tagus' waves
In ocean's jaws are lost, so frowned then
Mantua o'er Mincio's wave, and proudly stood
The brunt of war ; fast lock'd in Mincio's arms
It could defy e'en the fierce storm that now 240
In the horizon dark began to lour.

So great the dread of Eccelino's name,
None but the soldiers dare look towards the north.

Women and burghers cast down to the ground
Their doleful eyes, shuddering at every breeze ;
For now they thought each breeze came freighted from
The north with groans and agonizing shrieks.
The fame of Eccelino's march fast flew,
And, like a pestilence, shrunk many a heart
With sickness ; each pale vapour that arose 250
Upon the lake at dusky night, to eyes
Of fearful citizens now seem'd the breath
Of his fell mother ; e'en the sentinel,
On wall and rampart high, would quit his post,
And run into the court of guard, aghast,
So dense a gloom seem'd to o'ercloud the air.

But now proud Montferrat rides up and down,
With aspect bold, and gallant courtesy,
And laughs all fear to scorn, with haughty sneer ;
Yet, in the evening sky, many declar'd 260
They mail-clad warriors saw, on barbed steeds,
With lance in rest, running a fierce career ;
Long files of monks, chanting a pious psalm,
Were met in street and darksome ways, who bore
To burial coffins with black palls ; and then
The dark procession on the sight would fade ;
Their chaunts would die away upon the ear.
Untimely births brought monsters into day,

And shrieks, and dying groans, were often heard
Where none were seen abroad ; ill omen'd signs 270
Were rife, disturbing all, save Montferrat.
Some said a pale blue flame was seen to glide
Upon the lake, mantling a woman's form :
Awful and careworn was the haggard eye,
Brow bent, and look both piteous, and e'en fierce ;
At times, with melancholy grandeur dight,
It sunk engulph'd, and left sulphureous smells :
Many persuaded were that Adelaide
Was the foul fiend that haunted now the lake ;
Churches were throng'd, and holy monks, and priests, 280
More favour found than soldiers 'mongst the throng ;
For many now would deem themselves but lost ;
Soldiers, they thought, the body could not save ;
But priests and holy men might save the soul.
 'Midst this deep gloom, these vapours foul and dark,
Pale Fear, now plucking each man by the hair,
Dragg'd him along at will, with tott'ring steps,
Wild staring eyes, and pale and quivering mien ;
The giant monster, Fear, who shapeless is,
Though, in men's eyes, he every form assumes ; 290
Oft-times his shadow only meets the eye,
And then, 'tis thought, his real form is there ;
He stalks, by night, about our bed ; at noon,

He flits before our eyes, and our hearts throb ;
We wildly gaze around, and then he's gone.
Unknown, immeasurable, is his form ;
His lofty head doth reach the sky ; his feet
Are in the bowels of the earth deep sunk.
Such is gaunt Fear, who faster breedeth lies
Than tongue can tell ; for he the vision true 300
O' the soul distorts ; all things he doth distort ;
Beneath a veil, such as the twilight throws
Around, oft-times delighteth he to dance
'Mongst sprites and witches on the midnight heath ;
He rolls the stream of battle back ; he sits
In th' angry storm, on each wild wave that lifts
The ship ; and seizes with his icy grasp
Each heart, when 'gainst the rock she strikes and sinks.

Amidst the storm, Hermione shines like
The evening star ; she shone as if her robe 310
Was bound by Venus' zone ; within her form
All grace and loveliness confin'd ; she saw
Not fear, because her eyes were dazzled quite
With the bright rays of Azzo's glorious day :
Her ears with his high praises rung ; no more
He e'en one rival found among the chiefs
Of the League ; all declar'd that he had stopp'd
The current of the adverse force, and damm'd

The course of its huge river up, so that
Into a thousand streams it flow'd ; yet now 320
Gather'd it was again, to flow o'er walls
Of Mantua. Still Hermione was blind
To this ; the hero of the League she saw,
She saw his mighty arm uplifted high,
And 'neath its force, the adverse chieftains fall,
And bite the earth, beneath his horse's hoof
Gasping their last breath. Proudly in her hall
She sat, and fed upon her constant love ;
The blush of conscious pride, flush'd her warm cheek :
On bed of roses she repos'd, joyous 330
As if she clasp'd the hero in her arms,
And panted on his manly breast ; on which,
Honour his seal had set in many a scar.

And now the sun, with streaming golden mane,
Encircled round with clouds of various hues
Of richest purple, from his toil releas'd,
Sinking in ocean, sought his western bed.
Ave Maria, bell of parting day,
Toll'd loud from steeple tow'r ; at every gate
The evening watch is set ; flutter the breasts 340
Of many a wanton damsel, who begins
Her terrors to forget ; caught by the air
Of some frank soldier, who his wonted mien

Of careless mirth still keeps amidst the gloom :
She makes the forg'd excuse to steal abroad ;
Her prattling lips a thousand questions ask ;
Admires her gallant's warlike gear, nor dreams
Of danger nigh. Surpris'd and caught, and soon
Subdued by love, the urchin hits, with aim
More sure than the cross bow of Genoese, 350
Or twanging yew of active Tyrolese.
Soldiers Love's reapers are, that mow his rich
And golden harvest down ; for soldiers oft
Will lead fair dames astray ; no contrast can
Be found so strong, as warrior blithe and bold ;
And prying spouse suspicious, women still
Are gen'rous, and will confidence repay ;
But all delight to cheat a jealous spouse.
Wedlock ! thou happiest state, when friendship pure
Succeeds the burnt-out hymeneal torch ; 360
When love and friendship will alternate play,
And pure equality 'twixt two hearts reign !
But woe unto the wretched state, whene'er
Distrust and fierce debate quench Hymen's torch,
And dash to pieces friendship's urn, that still
Should stand the votive off'ring of long love !
Thus heedless were the gallant and the gay,
When youthful blood bubbles with Courage high,

Or Love, pale Fear sneaks like a cur away.
Proud as thou art, usurping Love, fierce Strife 370
Shall chase thee from this pleasant bow'r, where Death
Shall deal his darts around, and Agony
Shall roar, and maids and dames, forlorn, shall clasp
And wring their hands, and weep and rave in vain.
No more for them shall glide the gilded bark
Through Mincio's limpid wave, with serenade,
Vocal no more ; no longer shall they join
The rustic dance at eve, when youthful swains
And country nymphs shake off autumnal toil,
Gathering the full and bursting grape ; for War 380
Hath rais'd his horrid head, to frown upon
Joy and sweet blandishment, which flow from smiles
Of Nature in her happier hour ; when she
From teeming womb, her savoury gifts pours forth ;
When earth with plenty groans, and life o'erflows
With over exuberance ; overfraught
Like swelling stream that scorns its narrow banks,
She teems with life ; myriads invisible
On myriads rise, in glitt'ring columns live
Of the warm sun, and die when he his face 390
Doth hide, for in his beams alone they're seen.
Hence universal life doth flow,
Striving to burst forth into being ; hence springs

Life, form'd of ev'ry varied mould and shape,
That Nature fancies, in her wildest mood ;
All this from Nature's bounty flows, around
The millions shine, and circle high in air,
In token of the sun's gay smiles ; warble
A thousand voices in each grove, nor heed
The blast of war, that soon their melody 400
Shall hush, and stead of these, the trumpet hoarse
Shall bray its warlike note, and rolling drums,
And furious yells, urge man to rush in arms
Of death. Black soon shall stand the cottage walls
Roofless ; olives and vines shall crackle in
The nightly flames, that mark the circling camp
Round Mantua's leaguer'd walls. No more shall bleat
Its fleecy flocks, nor low the milk-white steer :
For locusts of fell war the land devour.
On these alarms, rush then, ye brave ! nor wait 410
A fate still more accurst, a tyrant's rule
Within your walls ; yet is there e'en than this
A fate still more accurst, breath'd by the arch-fiend,
The curse of foreign tyrants, who invade
Thy land, and o'er thy head who shake the rod
Of conquest ; this the draught of gall that man
Should never quaff ; and if proud arms are then
Of no avail, lawful he hath recourse

To bowl and dagger, for God's charter high
Is Liberty ; the presence of a host 420
Of foreign foes, the worst of slavery is ;
Like rankest weeds, should they be rooted out,
And thrown to rot, upon the healthy soil.

With rapid strides on Mantua's walls marches
The foe ; in person, in the front he led
His level columns ; scouts he had abroad,
Surprise was all he sought ; compact and firm
His legions swiftly mov'd ; they seemed to fly
On Conquest's buoyant wings : like the keen hounds
Who scent the fox afar, and straight then rush 430
To cover ; towns to them the cover were,
In which their game was hid, and quick from town
To town they ran, with keenest appetite.
But when Romano stood before the walls
Of Mantua, proudly frowning on his host,
O'er Mincio's wave, arm'd at each tower, and gate,
And battlement ; and when he saw, that from
Each steeple flow'd the red-cross flag, sure sign
Of one accord within, that all there join'd
In hatred to his sway ; short on his haunch 440
He rein'd his steed, and gaz'd with doubt around,
And on Cremona haply might have mov'd,
Had he not deem'd he saw the pale blue flame

Flitting above the lake; but nought it prov'd,
Save treacherous wreaths of vapour that deceiv'd.

The army pile their ringing arms, and throw
Their harness off; each troop now camps on ground
On which they stand; the picquets soon are plac'd.
Both horse and man rush to the cooling stream.
Droves now of steers and sheep sink 'neath the knife;
The kettles boil; the savoury smell ascends
In wreaths of smoke. Soon the repast is o'er,
Then all sink down in balmy sleep, and reigns
Deep silence round, save where the sentinels
Call on each other to chase drowsiness
Away, and list each whisper of the breeze,
And watch each shadow from the wall that falls.

Scarce had Aurora streak'd the orient sky,
When stout Florestan rode from out the gate
With rapid strides, to urge his bounding steed 460
Across the plain, and unto Azzo's camp
To bear th' unwelcome news, that Mantua now
Invested was, and pray relief might soon
Be sent to its beleaguer'd walls; above
The gate through which he rode, rose an antique
And lofty tower, and on that tower sat, long
Ere break of day, his gentle love, the sweet
And wanton Viola, who, love-sick nymph,

Most gentle had become ; in frantic mood
Pass'd she the night, with tears that trickled fast 470
Adown her breast convuls'd ; and now she sat
Weary, her cheek reclin'd upon her hand,
Piteous as turtle-dove, that from the nest
Beholds her mate torn by the cruel hawk.
The warrior peering round, sought where to force
A passage through the foe : on every side
He finds himself enclosed : no arms he wore,
Save his well-temper'd sword, nor corslet bright,
Nor mail, so he might less encumber'd be,
And his well-winded barb might skim across 480
The distant plains ; the fleetest steed he rode,
Cull'd from the stud of Montferrat, renown'd
For steeds of purest race ; but now, alas !
Nor horse nor rider could force through the camp ;
For there a busy swarm of Saracens
Left by th' Imperialists, careering ran
Around, like flight of birds that hover 'bout
A hawk : sudden Florestan wheeling rush'd
I' the midst, rememb'ring not his lack of arms.
Ne'er had he counted numbers in the field, 490
Ne'er had he thought of foes, but them to drive
Like chaff before the wind ; to right and left
The Infidels he fells ; his sword had known

Them well in Palestine : they broke away,
They arm again ; like snakes their javelins hiss.
Frantic, fair Viola from the high gate
Beholds her cavalier rush desp'rately
On his sure doom ; she calls, she screams, she pants,
Convuls'd ; now they drive near the gate, and then
Sweep off ; in rapid course the knight runs round, 500
And then is met, and turn'd, like stag at bay,
Tossing and goring hounds, at every turn
He slays all in his reach. Now trumpets sound
To horse, in camp and town ; the dust in wreaths
Darkens the scene ; quick Viola flies down
The tow'r, follows a troop that o'er the bridge
Rushes ; she frantic traverses the plain,
Where nought she sees save falchion's flash, and dust
Rising in dusky wreaths, and Saracens
Scatter'd around, the dying or the dead. 510
Now she descries amid a heap of slain
A knight in Templar's garb, laid on his breast ;
She turns him o'er, and then in anguish sees
Florestan's eyes veil'd in eternal night ;
And round his neck was hung the well-known chain,
Entwin'd with that which did his badge sustain.
These talismans might courage give, and fire
His soul to high emprise ; yet could not fate

Avert, nor save him from its chilling doom.
Jav'lins were stuck in him, like the sharp quills 520
Of porcupine, and quiver'd in his sides.
On his stiff corse she throws her lovely form,
And clasps it to her heart, kissing to warmth
Its pale cold lips, and bathing in its gore.
Soon from the city forth streams out a crowd
Of youthful warriors, and of tender maids,
Who from the walls the sad sight had survey'd.
Around Florestan's bloody corse they throng,
On which the senseless Viola was laid.
Despair had every limb and gesture now 530
Distorted and convuls'd; her accents wild
In passion's voice call'd on the dull, cold clay.
Her eyeballs roll'd, and ev'ry nerve and vein
Were strain'd in that fair face so deadly pale.
Her raven hair was clotted with the gore
Of her brave lover, deep sobs drown'd her voice,
And darkness hover'd round her swimming sight,
That nothing saw, save the knight's ghastly form.
Asunder from that form she's torn; aloft
The soldiers lift the corse; supported on 540
Their shoulders broad, bear it within the gate,
Attended by the damsels weeping 'neath
Their veils, just now from matin prayer come forth.

And Viola, with tott'ring tread, drags on
Her steps, but when by chance a glimpse she caught
Of the lov'd face of him she mourn'd in death,
She shrieks, she clasps her hand, she reels, and swoons.

Hermione arose, and threw a veil
O'er her bright golden hair, and straight unto
The frantic damsel's chamber flew ; in her 550
Kind arms she clasp'd her long, and her pale cheek
With many tears bedew'd ; then to the bath
She led her tott'ring steps, to wash the blood
And dust away ; and consolation strove
To minister, and in oblivious sleep
To quench the visions of the dreadful scene ;
She pour'd the balm of her own gentle heart
Into the rent the fates had torn so deep
In Viola's fond heart. 'Tis ever thus
That Woman should be found, the minister 560
Of consolation in affliction's hour ;
For Charity her first best instinct is :
As rubies' glow, surpassing every gem
In richest hue that brightest sparkle in
A diadem, so doth this lambent flame
Of Heav'n all other virtues far surpass.
Thrice blessed Charity wraps round her heart !
She breathes it forth to soothe our dismal woes,

Assuaging horrid War's fierce blows, calming
Ambition's fiery soul, that Justice scorns, 570
And plucking down his lofty crest, to stoop,
And sigh o'er poor Humanity, oft stripp'd
Naked, and torn, and bleeding 'neath his feet.
With head erect, encircled in the clouds,
Ambition looks not on the earth, strewn thick
With victims: to pluck down his lofty crest,
The purpose is of Charity, thrice bless'd,
And Woman doth her lovely handmaid shine!

Soon as Hermione had plac'd the nymph
Upon her couch, and lull'd to calm repose, 580
Cooling the frenzy of her heated brain,
Then straight unto the Montferrat she went,
And in these words address'd the valiant chief:
" Oh, chief, proud pillar of the League, I come
To ask the burial of a daring knight
As e'er in saddle sat; by Azzo's hand
Knighted, beneath a lofty palm, with that
Good sword he wore and fought at Nazareth.
Alas, that sword must rust! for where's the hand
Could wield its weight, and where's the valiant heart 590
That can direct that hand in the turmoil
Of the fierce fight? Oft-times would Azzo say,
Few could with Florestan compare; whene'er

The combat rag'd, and heavy blows fell thick
 Around, few knights could in their saddle sit,
 And bear the dreaded point of his fix'd lance.
 His presence oft a squadron prov'd, that could
 Alone drive back a squadron ; for the brave
 Would ever rally round his colours true,
 Carnation, violet, white, the emblems meet 600
 Of faith to his fair lady, lord, and friend.
 Steep'd now in deepest grief, that lady weeps.
 Of gentle blood she came as e'er was rear'd
 In the great house of Est' ; graceful her form ;
 Her fancy frolic, as her heart was wild,
 That knew no guile ; she lov'd the knight, for he
 Had sav'd her once from ruffian hands, and now
 A suppliant I come to beg the boon
 Of the last honours to the glorious dead.
 Vouchsafe, oh, chief, his obsequies to grace." 610

To which the chief replied : " Oh, lady bright,
 Fairest of dames where most are fair, in this
 Blest land of Italy, none more than I
 Lament the death of this bold knight, for I
 Beheld his deeds in Parma's bloody field ;
 Two banners he tore down, and many a helm
 Was cleft by him ; his well-knit limbs now lie
 Stiff ; in pale death they're wrapt, no more to vault

With ringing harness on the fiery steed ;
No more he'll lead the way to combat, like 620
A pioneer, and hew a passage through
Embattled ranks, by treach'rous javelins pierc'd.
Well have I mark'd his quick and lively eye,
And auburn curling hair ; his thick set beard,
That stamp'd the vigour of his frame, that well
Endured both heat and cold, hunger or thirst,
And then could quaff the ruddy wine all night,
Or at his lady's feet, at love's command,
Could gently sigh, with amorous dalliance play,
And then arise, and shake the sounding plain, 630
With headlong bold career, on steed that few
Could rein. Alas ! he now lies stiff and cold !
But ere to-morrow's evening bell shall sound,
With honours meet we'll bear him to the grave."

Now in the vesper hymn, with one accord,
All join'd ; by all, save hapless Viola,
The Virgin's bland protection was invok'd ;
E'en Heav'n to her seem'd lost, for black despair
O'ersadow'd her, and brooded o'er her soul,
And death for her had nought of terror left ; 640
Existence seem'd a blank, the world a void ;
And unsupported and alone she thought
She stood, bereft of every hope ; without

One speck whereon to fix her eye, one spot
To fix her foot. Beneath that thought she sunk !
Soon from her trance she starts, for she doth hear
The tolling of her lover's passing bell ;
Awoke to bitter anguish, now she strives
To gaze upon his airy flight ; Heav'n wide
Its portals seems to open, to receive 650
Her wandering, unbound spirit, that now was
Lost in endless vacancy : " I now come,
I come !" she cried, " to the dark grave, to thee !"
For then she thought she saw effulgent Hope
Chase blank Despair away, and point to Heaven,
Stretching her friendly hand to lead her through
The vacant air. In real life we but
Live in half our being, though we ever strive
To break our chain, and soar beyond the earth.
Deep tolls the warrior's knell, and all forget 660
The fearful host that round the walls are camp'd.
The bell, all eloquent, told loud that death
Had quench'd the warrior's spirit in his breast ;
And silent grief cast down each sad fix'd eye.
With arms revers'd, and pointed to the ground
The martial legions move, more solemn still
Than monks in files that chaunt the midnight prayer.
Now the shrill notes of war are soften'd down

To a sad dirge ; the corse is borne with all
The pomp of grief ; his war horse slowly march'd 670
Behind the bier, and knights would raise their eyes
But to perceive a blank, where stream'd his crest.
To earth are now consign'd his stiff cold limbs.
Soon as the ev'ning dew spangled the grass
That o'er his head was laid, sad Viola,
With basket of sweet flowers, that her white hand
Had gather'd, with quick steps, and unobserv'd,
Cover'd from head to foot with a black veil,
Went to his grave, and, lighted by the mild
And melancholy moon, the fresh turf strew'd 680
With flowers and garlands, such as he was wont
To give to her in days of love and joy ;
And every night she sat, and mourn'd her love,
And every eve would fresh flowers strew ; upon
The dewy grass her burning cheek she laid,
And then her parch'd and throbbing heart would quench
Its sorrow from the fountain of her eyes.
As oft in sultry summer's low'ring sky,
In eastern clime, with joy we see the clouds
Gather, prepar'd to burst, and soon around 690
Red lightning leaps, and thunder roars, and clouds
Pour down a deluge, and o'erwhelm beneath
The golden corn, and break the tender flowers ;

Yet from this draught all nature feels reviv'd.
Weep on, fair nymph, for ne'er you'll feel again
Passion intense, as in first love, that burns
With flame so fierce : love's fire is soon burnt out,
A warmer friendship then its place supplies.
Can friendship e'er supply the place of love ?
One moment of love's warm ecstatic bliss, 700
That melts two souls in one, and makes their will
Unconquerable, and both joins in one,
Transcends an age of friendship : for love dwells
In other spheres, nor grovels on the earth,
But to the stars transports our mutual souls,
And scoffs at death, and poverty, and chains.
Oh, when 'tis lost, where shall we find it more ?
Weep on, then, Viola, thou gentle nymph,
Thy full-blown rose of bliss its leaves hath shed ;
Wither'd they fall, fragrant for thee no more. 710
Drink thou the nightly dew that's fresh, to cool
The fev'rish anguish of thy troubled breast,
And gaze upon the waning moon, and hope
Thy grief may wane as soon ; and if thou still
Canst not forget, pray that thou mayst become
Fickle as she, nor waste thy morning bloom
In hopeless grief : soon must thy beauty fade
And wane ; too soon thy faded form will sink

In the cold grave : let then this grief be brief,
And fast out-pour'd, thus sooner may its source 720
Be dried whence it in gushing torrents flows.
What sight more lovely e'er to see than this,
A damsel weeping o'er a warrior's grave,
Grassy and unadorn'd, save by her form,
That form so fair, to him united still !
In tenderest mem'ry's sweets she seem'd to live,
And deepest grief here tied the wedding knot :
Beyond the grave we can united be
By bands more pure, more tender than in life :
For each long moment sees the fancied form 730
Of those we've lost, and lov'd, and still we love.

Here hath my sullen muse now sought to sing
The glorious death of a most val'rous knight,
And of the wailing sorrow of his love,
All solitary left, melted in tears
For joys of love that never may return :
How she would gaze all night most wistfully
Upon the moon, repining at the hour
She first saw light, cursing her birth : what theme
More fit for poet's lay, or painter's art ? 740
Most subtle to disclose the passions high,
Of souls heroic : for what lovelier is
On earth, than this devotion of the brave

And fair ? Each gen'rous breast delights to dwell
On val'rous feats of arms in war, or deeds
Of love in lady's bow'r ; and where can grief
Be found so deep, as where a gentle dame
Hath lost a warrior lover, whose high soul
Envelop'd her's, just as his warlike form
Is cas'd in armour bright ? Then pardon me, 750
If I dare touch the killing string whose thrill
The gentle damsels' hearts attunes to love !
Love their existence is ; ever in it
Rejoice they, or in sadness pine and die.

Pond'ring on fate, within his tent now sat
Romano : incantations he had made,
And summon'd all the pow'r of his fierce soul,
Aid from the realms of darkness to obtain.
He look'd abroad at morning twilight gray,
To see if fiends or sprites were near ; but none 760
He saw ; no tidings could he get ; the stars
For him no longer seem'd to shine or speak ;
His astrologians all confounded were,
Declaring now some other dread power had
Th' ascendant gain'd. Back on his haughty will
He fell, and in his rebel heart an host
He found, that would 'gainst highest Heav'n wage war.
For quick a tumult in his passions rose

That found an utterance in his tongue, that now
In dreadful impious speech did thus burst forth: 770
“ Have I a will ? then where the will of Heav’n
Or Hell (Hell once me favour’d !) now doth leave
Me undecided in my full career.
Heav’n’s aid have I disdain’d, nor do believe
It is all powerful, since I see its ways
Are cross’d, and at defiance its behests
Thus set. Within my breast I feel my will,
And shall I look for other fruitless aid ?
What’s fate to me if my own fate I make ?
My fate is in my will, and will and fate 780
To me are one, and on I go, of Heav’n
Or Hell reckless ; the first I e’er disdain’d,
And Hell proves false to me, who feels that both
Are in the human heart alone contain’d.
No further I will ask them ; so farewell
To both, and my own heart in future e’er
Shall be my monitor, my aid, my Heav’n,
And Hell : out of my breast no aid I seek.
Now all my soul rush through the every nerve
Of every soldier that I lead ; fill them 790
With all my rage and deadly spite, and let
Us pour our wrath o’er this proud wall, that dares
To frown on me ; and, like the sullen bull

On butcher's holiday is bated here,
My dogs he'll gore and toss; yet down shall fall
At last; nor shall I lose my precious time
In long and weary siege, while armies are
On foot; but as the Emp'ror scal'd the wall
Of strong Vincenza, lately sack'd, so I
The lofty walls of Mantua will subdue." 800

He spake, and conscious pride drove all the blood
From his stout rebel heart, and knit his joints
So firm, he seem'd to spurn the earth, and stand
On his own force alone; his will became
An element to form some new dread power
In the vast world, and mar those that had mov'd
All things below through all primeval time.
Yet what is will of man, against the will
Of God above? Hath the sere leaf a will
That in autumnal gale is drifted? Hath 810
The wave a will that a blue mirror shines,
Then curling crisps along, then foams and swells
In angry surge? Whence comes its will to move?
From its own breast profound it doth not come:
From Heav'n's high arch the whirling pow'r arose,
That moves the mighty bosom of the deep,
In fearful eddies whirls its waters round,
Which suck within their rav'nous jaws, then dash

Against the shore the stately vessel's pride,
Where is our will? E'en in the gentlest mood 820
Of Nature, 'gainst her 'tis in vain to strive :
What is the will of the mad populace,
When to distraction stung by pride, or by
Blind pow'r, they trample all to earth? Where is
Their will? they rise, they rush, they shout, and deal
Their blows around, and in their fetters dance :
Yet are they soon o'erpower'd and bound anew.
A will supreme doth ever rule ; all, all,
Are borne upon its ever-soaring wings.
Had Eccelino now a will to fire 830
Proud Mantua's lofty domes, and to root out
Fair Freedom's lovely form, and scare her thence ?
Freedom in fair Italia found a lair,
There suckled by a wolf was bred, and soon
The diadem of the wide world she wore
Upon her lofty brow, tow'ring to Heav'n:
But to herself she an apostate turn'd,
As nations late have seen with grief and shame
Many an earthly king who call'd on her,
(And not in vain) back to their gloomy thrones 840
To light their steps, trample her sacred lamp
'Neath their apostate feet, and spill the oil
That fed its light: the active instruments

Are they of the great wrath divine who pours
The phial of that wrath on daring man,
And pours it too upon the dazzling crowns
Of monarchs, and down hurls them quicker than
They rose, or sends them wandering through the world,
Or, reft of sense, like dogs to bay the moon,
Or chains them to a rock lash'd by the wave, 850
To see the visions of their glory pass,
Starting at the stupendous march of fate.
So newly woke from dreams, the dreamer starts.
Presumptuous souls ! that dare e'en Heav'n and Hell,
And Fate, in their own wills find fate, a will
That strives to bind and conquer all, tow'ring
Like Babel, yet with tongues confus'd within.

Now all was bustle for the city's storm :
Beyond the camp in villa lodg'd the chief,
Assuming then to govern from his camp : 860
His camp the centre was of his fierce rule,
And now in rich repast he sooth'd his care ;
For him the tusky boar sent forth a smoke,
And the fat swine loaded his ample board,
Well stor'd with fish, and fowl, and Tuscan flasks,
Such as thou, Redi, in thy jovial song
Hast prais'd, when thou triumphantly hast brought
The conqueror of the East to Tuscan hills,

There in his richest realm to sport, and toss
The sparkling goblets high, with Muscadel 870
O'erfraught, and Montalcino, which he press'd
To the ripe lip of Ariadne bright,
Lock'd in his rapt'rous arms, with twining vine
And ivy crown'd; then, since with seven bright stars
Immortal shine they, type of nuptial knot
Fast tied they are, with vine and myrtle green;
Sweetest of bonds, joyous and ever gay.
Nor did the god forget rich Chianti's bowl,
Bright Chianti, king of wines! that's mantled in
His blood-red robes, and potent marshals all 880
The spirits in his bold array; for lip
Of lover, woman, minstrel fit: that wine
Hath Bacchus ever lov'd, as thou, sweet bard,
In strains harmonious sung. And now the chief
Of Padua quaff'd alone this potent drink.
Oh, gen'rous grape! thou canst allay the ills
Of mortal life, and us immortal make,
And bid us soar on Fancy's wings in realms
Of joy and bliss. Thou canst the soldier e'er
A hero make, and crown each lover's heart 890
With bliss awhile; mild Friendship, by thine aid,
Fires mutual souls, and the high mantling grape
Hides from our daring visions Fate, and fell

Despair doth plunge his gorgon head deep in
Tenebrious shades, and rosy Hope breathes joy
Ambrosial on our hearts, oh, gen'rous grape !

Secure the tyrant thought he drain'd the cup ;
But tumults now assail'd his startling ear
Of discontent and wrangling voices fierce.
Two brothers, from Verona, were here dragg'd 900
To meet their dismal doom, of noble race
Of Montecelli, in Vincenza born ;
Who both exclaim'd, that they had faithful prov'd
To Eccelino, and been ever true
To th' Emperor ; yet could he not repress
His rage ; and, rushing out, arraign'd them both
As traitors vile. This, when the elder heard,
With such ingratitude his heart was stung,
And, like a thunder-cloud, it burst in rage
Upon the tyrant's head ; far fiercer than 910
The Lybian lion sprang he on his prey,
And tore him down, and threw himself upon
Romano, searching for his dagger hilt
Or knife, yet none he found ; that day (so fates
Decreed) the tyrant did not at his side
His dagger wear ; that day, and only that ;
Yet ever 'fore and since a dagger he
Had worn. Then Monte seiz'd him with his teeth,

And limb from limb had torn, but that the sword
Of Jacobino seal'd his doom, and sav'd 920
The tyrant: he a native Paduan sav'd,
One who had Padua's streets erst drench'd with blood.
Oh, Fates! how strange ye oft do seem to us,
Who blindly stumble o'er the rugged path
Of life, or helpless wander o'er its wastes.
For who can tell what is to come? who can
E'en read the book of fate, that ne'er unfolds
Its leaves but day by day? Oft startled then
We read, and see that human wisdom's nought.
This I profoundly feel: vouchsafe, oh, God, 930
To guide my stumbling steps aright; I wait
Thy will, for never can I walk alone.

Romano sadden'd, and remorse he felt,
That he so hated now should be, that men
Should tigers seem, and at his sight alone
Fly at his throat, and strive to tear him limb
From limb; such horror inexpressible
He wrought in man, as caus'd them to revolt
E'en from their common nature, and become
As tigers rous'd: he shudder'd as he felt 940
That his red crimes had shut him out the pale
Of human kind; still more he felt his will
Was nought; for many days on couch he lay,

Torn, wounded, humbled in the dust, the sport
 Of fate he could no longer call his own.
 A death-like silence reign'd throughout the camp.

Turn we, my Muse, to hail three dames, that now
 Are pouring their enthusiastic souls
 In mystic rites divine. Mild sat deep grief
 On Viola, with heavenly fervour gleam'd 950
 Her eyes subdued, graceful she bent, with head
 Low bow'd before the altar, and anew
 Seraphic fire touch'd her warm breast, aloft
 Borne by the organ's soul-subduing strains,
 And the deep chant of monks in choir attun'd.
 She seem'd awhile her mortal sight to close,
 And all around an holy light would throw
 Mild melancholy on th' impassion'd soul,
 And harmony sublime, where light and shade
 Together dimly blend ; sweet luxury 960
 Of calm religious grief that melts the heart :
 In softest tears it trickled down her cheek.
 Abstracted oft from all around, she who
 Once glow'd a woman now a seraph burns.
 Each hour of rites divine, Hermione
 And meek Lucinda would their tranquil steps
 Bend to the church, and humbly there implore
 The grace of Heav'n to fall upon the League.

Hence, stern Religion, fly far hence, thou child
Of man's cold-blooded heart, that will transfer 970
Its steel to the all-ruling soul, and shut
God's creatures here from his great clemency,
His first best attribute, because the last
Of man tyrannical, through self-love blind.
But hail, thou mystic Faith ! that through long years
Hast in the fervent bosom glow'd, and still
With age and glory venerable, sit'st
Crown'd in th' eternal city ; in those vast
Majestic fanes thou sit'st with dignity.
Kind art thou e'er to those who shelter seek 980
Beneath thy wing, though not of thine, nor born
Beneath thy roof ; thee do I hail, for thou
Art mild to all thy congregated flocks.
Thou from tradition ever witness bear'st,
That there is God, and an immortal soul !
Oft have I stray'd thy fretted roofs along,
At close of day have seen the sun's last smile
Gild the rich painting of thy casements bright,
And throw an holy gleam upon the face
Of sorrow ; or the hoary locks of those 990
Who feebly totter towards the grave ; or on
The widow'd dame bereft, surrounded by
Her orphan brood ; or on the children meek

Of Sorrow and of disappointed Hope,
That droop before their time ; or on Remorse,
Gnawing with venom'd tooth the bursting heart.
All seek repose beneath thy vaulted roofs,
Thou mystic mother of all faith divine.
The gloomy Sabatarian with despite
(Abhorring nature and mild charity) 1000
Views thee ; the festal day of God he makes
A day of dismal penance, and a day
Not cloth'd with Nature's joys nor the sun's rays,
But hung with sackcloth ; sullen thus, his God
He doth blaspheme, turning Creation's smiles
To tears and frowns : Nature from him recoils,
And shudders at his envious priestcraft mean.
God frowns and smiles in Nature's visage : him
All living things adore, all life shews forth
His praise ; for he is life supreme that ne'er 1010
Doth die, that passeth like a radiant smile
O'er Nature's face ; when he doth frown, 'tis death,
And when he smiles 'tis life ; how can we then
Nature from God dissever, and why mourn ?
Still rather in the Deity rejoice.
Yet Fate doth come, and chafes with curb of steel,
And bows the proudest spirit down to earth.
Oh, Fate, thy hand's invisible, that doth

Us rudely drag along through quailing life
And sickly waning hope ; and in thy train 1020
Glides ghastly death, thine awful instrument,
And chains and dungeons are at thy command.
Oh, Fate ! thine handmaid Fortune ever is,
Though she but seldom stays : so swift she flies,
She might the rainbow seem, her brilliant hues
Might form the arch above ; we see her not,
But still discern the circle she describes
In air, as she flies round the world, scatt'ring
Purses of gold, and gems, and crowns of bays,
And kingly crowns, and royal sceptres too, 1030
And Vict'ry's laurel wreaths, and wedding rings
For which each maiden pants ; and when we catch
A glimpse of her, we turn our back on death,
And madly rush into the furious fray.
Thou, wild Enchantress of each phrenzied brain,
Thee, Fortune ! all men worship, but none strive
Thy love to win, but daring souls, who blind
Will run, and try to follow thee, for thou
Art seen most brilliant, when the storm blows hard :
When nations rise and break their chains, when mad
Bellona, sweeping in her gory car, 1041
With loosen'd rein, whirls on her headlong steeds,
And warriors reel and roll in death, armies

Are scatter'd, kingdoms are o'erthrown, one man
Doth rise, an unknown pigmy ; that, but touch'd
By thy bright wand, a giant straight becomes,
Who doth o'erstride the earth. He reigns awhile
Like Cæsar, and like Cæsar falls ! Who can
Rely on thee, capricious dame, that art
Brilliant in ever-varying colours clad ? 1050

Is sorrow ne'er to have an end ? and are
We broken hearted, doom'd our sad race e'er
To run, with ever blighted hopes to view
Successful villains trample on mankind,
And threadbare Virtue taunt with jeering sneer ;
Virtue and Vice both quenched be alike,
In a frail mortal soul mould'ring in dust,
Leaving but the mem'ry of love or hate,
As we inclin'd may be towards them to feel,
On the frail tablets of the human mind ? 1060
If so, better to be the brutes that graze
The fields, and fatten for the butcher's knife.
But we can never scan the ways of God,
Nor know, or why, or how his spirit works,
For all we know, is told by whispering Hope !
And in her temple to propitiate Hope,
By Faith and Charity now led, these dames
Of gentle blood were wont ; and then to sigh

For their escape, trembling with fear to fall
Within the dreaded tyrant's iron fangs. 1070

One eve, their wistful eyes cast o'er the lake,
Circling beneath the rising breeze, they deem'd
They saw a monster, rolling towards the shore;
Now on the wave it rose, and now beneath,
Then rose again, and then swam on with force.

This omen each did her own way resolve,
Yet each agreed that it portentous was :
Now a deep dive it took, and long remain'd
Beneath the wave ; nigh to the walls then rose,
And quick they heard the black dwarf's sharp, shrill voice.

" Oh, save thee, lady fair ; I greet thee from 1081
My lord of Est' now in Romanian fields ;
Sudak the faithful, thee unto his lord
Will bear, though devils here should guard the lake,
Than the fiend Eccelino fiercer far.

For round my neck an amulet I wear,
Which in the deep sands the Red Sea beneath
I found, when diving to fulfil a dream
I pluck'd the coral red ; with it I range
The world in safety. Speed then, lady fair, 1090

For I foresee a storm which comes to help
Our flight : fear nought ; for know, my mother was
A witch, in Upper Egypt bred : she taught

Me all her mystic lore, and while her charms
I bear, I fear not man, nor sprite, nor fiend."

As when some traveller, who the rugged Alps
Hath climb'd, and pass'd the toilsome day midst rocks
And barrenness around, whose heads are cloth'd
Eternally in drizzly storms of hail
And rain, and whose dark aspects hang with gloom
'Neath canopies of black and rolling clouds, 1101
Casts suddenly his wondering eyes below
On Italy, bright smiling like a bride,
Woo'd by the evening sun, sees every charm
Of her fair face expand, his toils beguil'd
To pleasure turn : so smiles Hermione,
And every feature now was lit to joy ;
And as her heart frolic'd and leap'd, the blood
Rush'd quickly to that face to tell the tale,
That pallid Fear and Love can never wend 1110
Their steps unequal in one company ;
For Love will bound like roe, or, like the fox,
Through wily paths will creep ; whilst Fear will stand
Aghast : now on the damsels twain he fix'd
His icy grasp. Lucinda mild then first
The raptur'd silence broke : " Hermione,"
In accents deep, impassion'd she exclaim'd,
" Oh ! ponder well, ere you the fearful step

Attempt ; consider, lady, who you are :
What pledge hath Sudak that from Est' he comes? 1120
Sure evil influences are afloat,
And hover in the air ; then trust not him,
Nor trust to waves and winds your precious self,
To traverse wasted fields on every side,
Beset with war hounds who hunt up and down.
Last night I heard the owlet's boding note ;
This morning, at first light awoke, I saw
A dove attempt its flight, but ere it pass'd
The walls, by rav'nous hawk 'twas seiz'd and torn.
Oh, lady, omens like to these appear 1130
But to forewarn us of our certain doom."

Unmov'd and unappall'd, Hermione
Remain'd, for Love flash'd his bright vision 'fore
Her eyes, pale Fear fled far, and her breast glow'd
With joy ; then with uplifted hand and plaintive voice
Her mistress thus fair Viola address'd :
" Listen, oh, lady lov'd ! 'tis Viola
That speaks ; her silent grief must find a tongue
To urge thee to escape thy certain doom.
Think of Florestan's fate, his bleeding corse 1140
Before me now I see. Alas ! shall we,
Weak women, strive to fly, when such a knight
Hath fall'n ? Hermione, blest in her love,

Now braves her fate, and shuns her fortune hard ;
She sees no danger where love is, she feels
No fear ; but I, alas ! am now bereft
Of love, all that is left in mem'ry lives,
Harrow'd to madness when 'tis e'er refresh'd ;
Or lies in the cold, silent tomb, that will
Not sigh responsive to my sighs, throbs not 1150
Against the throbbing of my heart, but cools
My breast with its fresh evening dew : my grief
From eve to ruddy morn doth drink that dew,
And if thou tear'st me from my midnight lair,
Parch'd and exhausted, then I perish sure."

She spake, and wildly glar'd her eyes ; from 'neath
Her veil her coal-black hair escap'd, and white
And wan her cheek transparent gleam'd, and shew'd
The ghastly hue of death, and mark'd with all
The dreadful energy of grief, which in 1160
Weak minds will scatter wide the wits, but in
The firm wove brain its victims dooms to death.
Then fair Hermione the damsel clasp'd
In her fond arms, and shed a flood of tears,
Yet from her purpose ne'er was mov'd, but wav'd
Her hand to the black dwarf quick to embark.
Dark and unfathomable is our being,
'Toss'd on the wild waves of uncertain life,

Grasping to seize the future, at the past
Gasping, for oft the past would slay, if Hope, 1170
Th' aurora that opes life anew, clos'd not
The deep wound that the past hath dealt : we're toss'd
'Twixt two cross current tides, with equal force
That run ; 'twixt good and evil we are toss'd,
And, all unconscious of our fate, we lift
Our eyes to Heav'n to pray for good. Long years
May pass, and good still cometh not, and then
Hope long deferr'd doth sicken every heart ;
And many pine, and many reckless rush
Into the gulph of hideous black despair, 1180
In quenching life to quench all mortal ill.

The hot sciroc oppress'd the pregnant air,
And low'ring clouds darken the heavy sky ;
In camp and city drowsily all drag
Their weary limbs ; languor each ardent soul
Now damps, and all prepare to see down pour
A deluge ; the pale moon doth hide her face,
The glitt'ring starry host are all eclips'd.
Now to the pier the swiftest bark was drawn,
And Montferrat came down, with pity mov'd, 1190
And shuddering at the risk they ran, three dames
Without a knight, that trusted to escape
Through hosts on either side the lake ; and thus

He spake : " Now list, noble Hermione,
And unto valiant Est' these tidings bear ;
Tell him to haste to our relief, for soon,
If once the city's ta'en, the League is lost."

Now groups of mailed knights press round, that burn
Their aid to tender to the dames, and all
Would ev'ry toil and danger fain have brav'd, 1200
These to have serv'd, to be by their bright smiles
Repaid, reward young warriors covet most.
Hermione advanc'd with beating heart
And trembling step ; her soul was lost, absorb'd
By hope and fear alternate ; with deep sobs
Her damsels follow'd her ; but ere their oars
The boatmen ply'd, the black dwarf leap'd on board,
And with a flaring torch high on the prow
He stood, deep incantations mutt'ring low,
That seem'd awhile to lull the rising storm. 1210
The helmsman now commands to follow him ;
Then with a bound deep in the wave he plung'd ;
Holding his torch aloft, like dolphin swam
Before the bark ; the well-pois'd oars let fall
Splash in the waves. Swift the boat scuds across
The rippling flood, nor heeds the coming storm.
The sable night her darkest mantle wore,
And nought of light was seen, save the bright torch,

Which flared in fitful gleams athwart the lake.
Romano rising from his wakeful couch 1220
Had wander'd through the camp; the streaming light
He saw; aghast he stood, and the cold sweat
Started upon his brow: his mother's dread
And awful vision in his fancy danc'd.
Then as the bark approach'd, he spurr'd his steed,
And drove him in the lake; he fix'd his eyes
In wild amaze and speechless gaz'd, until
He heard the rattling thunder crash, and saw
The lightning stream athwart the pitchy night
In broad blue flakes, and then he saw the bark 1230
With its fair freight, and loud upon the guards
He call'd to shoot their arrows at its sides.
A deluge now pour'd down from fev'rish clouds
That the hot Afric wind had brought; the light
Vanish'd; and darkness thick, with pelting rain,
Still darker seem'd, and men were hurl'd to earth
By the contending elements. When ceas'd
The rain, the wind then blew a blast that tore
The tents, and sent them floating in the air
Like giant ghosts in shrouds: in eddies now 1240
They tow'ring rise, and then they fly aslant
The furious gale. The black dwarf grapples with
The flood, and through the surge he mounts the deck.

But now the baffled oars no longer ply,
She drifts Romano's prize upon the shore.
Sudak strains ev'ry nerve, he strives, he tugs,
He rears in haste the mast, and hoists a sail :
From shore a shower of arrows hiss, they pierce
The sail, the sides, the deck ; on their bent knees
The damsels pray ; aloft on billows borne 1250
The bark is toss'd, she scuds before the wind,
Away she scuds, and soon leaves far behind,
Mantua, and Eccelino, and the camp.
So oft fast bounding o'er th' Atlantic wave,
Columbia free to gain, the slave hath fled
Who groan'd in European chains, fled fast,
And left behind the bigot's, tyrant's frown,
To plant his footsteps in a wilderness
Untried, unknown. Oh, blest wild mountain nymph,
That dancest o'er the purple heath ! oh, thou, 1260
Fair Liberty ! to worship thee we fly
From home, from kindred blood, from land of birth ;
Thou art more genial to our panting souls
Than all the joys that courts and kings can give ! 1264

BOOK IX.

VOLTERRA, thou dost sit on thy high throne,
Thy brow by an Etruscan mural crown
Circled ; thou hast resisted time unknown,
And th' influence of ages, that have roll'd
O'er the frail lives of men that were, whom now
Not e'en the Muse can name ; the Roman scal'd
Thy time-worn walls, with rudest hand he crush'd
Thy splendid arts, whose wrecks all Roman art
Outshine. Queen of the Western Appenine,
Thou sittest on its loftiest throne, begirt 10
With rocks and mountains, that have seen the strife
Of the primeval elements in war ;
The winter torrent on its foaming breast
Oft brings the wrecks the Deluge left behind,
Monsters that rang'd o'er the young earth, now lost
With many more that range in distant climes ;
The hippopotamus and elephant,
See petrified ; with a vast wreck of life

Struck in an instant dead, their forms sent down,
Embalm'd in earth by Nature's hand, to mark 20
Her high decrees. Ages thy graceful porch
Hath stood, in Italy not to be since
Surpass'd ; yet man now boasts superior skill.
The human heart hath ever been the same,
And human passions lend their aid to art.
In thy dark ramparts frowns a tower, within
Whose prison walls twelve tedious years of light
Bereft, a ghastly victim was immur'd ;
And in the centre of the dungeon dank,
There ready yawn'd a well, with open mouth 30
T' ingulph the wretch, and thus to end his life
And woes : yet mark e'en of the weariest life
The love ; four steps, (nor more did ever take !)
Each facing to the north, west, east, and south,
Deep in the stone his frequent tread had worn.
Yet Fate decreed that he once more should feel
The morning breeze that health and pleasure wafts
O'er the pale brow. Forth from his prison comes
The ghastly wretch : once more he saw the sun,
And the breeze fann'd his faded cheek, and fann'd 40
His bosom too, and caus'd his heart to leap ;
But in that joyous leap it crack'd its strings,
And down he fell, and breath'd no more ! Whate'er

His crimes or virtues were, Felici's doom
Must strike with awe ! Are there in Europe none
Who for fair Freedom's sake are doom'd to lose
The blessed light of the all-glorious sun ?
Far happier now, Volterra, is thy lot ;
The peaceful swain, climbing thy stony paths
With jaded mules, at close of day looks round 50
When nigh the top, and sees the orb of light,
In vast expanse of clearest azure sky,
His bright course almost run, with majesty
Sink slowly, kissing the fresh western wave,
That o'er him gently rolls, and leaves behind
Meek twilight gray, devotion's holiest hour,
That most affects the human heart to faith.

Ionian maids have left their lofty lay ;
Mute is th' Etruscan muse, her song unsung,
Like Mona's harp, her lyre was torn, its strings 60
Unstrung ; the haughty Roman hush'd her voice,
And sought to make Etruria's birth unknown,
Jealous of fame that long before his own
Began. E'en now her genius we may trace
Majestic in her Cyclopean wall,
And pond'rous arch, yet lightly turn'd, without
Cement ; stones knit together ; stones, whose size
No modern lever knows ; in the light vase

With figures roughly sketch'd, yet breathing life,
The rich and beauteous bronze that's moulded fit 70
For every purpose, from each fashion'd god
To household stuff, and the sharp spear to pierce
The bristled sides of the wild tusky boar,
Ranging within her forests and deep glades,
On chesnuts and sweet acorns fed, where erst
Th' imperial whore with manly force had hurl'd
The hunter's spear, forcing the shaggy spoils
To earth. These were thy sports, Etruria ! now
Upon thy wrecks we gaze, and then are lost
In wonderment, nor know we well if thou 80
Mother or daughter to fair Greece hast been ;
But all can in thy vine-clad hills rejoice,
And valleys burnish'd with the golden corn ;
Thy graceful vines on mulberry festoon'd ;
Thy gray, green olive, waving on thy mounds,
Or hanging rocks ; thy buxom peasant maids
As autumn ripe, yet merry as the choir
Flutt'ring in spring, vocal afield as thrush
Or lark ; thy joyous fields I hail, which have
My sojourn been, nor do I envy those 90
Who tempt, with slipp'ry feet, ambition's heights.

Should any ask, perchance, who 'twas that pour'd
This unpremeditated lay, ofttimes

In unharmonious verse most quaintly cloth'd,
Oh, Clio, say, 'twas one who Fate decreed
Should wander from his hall and bower; who Fate
Decreed, though willing, should not glory reap
In tented fields, though he had sought it far
In the vast wilderness, beyond the bounds
Where the Atlantic waves in mountains roll, 100
And on the dun Iberian plains; one in
The senate mute; one, for whom Ceres shakes
Her spiky head in vain, in vain doth shower
Her golden grains; one who, with buoyant heart,
O'er-rode the stormy wave and tempest high,
That persevering Fate had round him rais'd:
Who gazing on the sun liv'd and rejoic'd!
Of artificial man rejected, who,
Save Nature boon, no other parent own'd;
The mighty mother from whose paps he drew 110
This nourishment; she is my goddess, she
My parent dear, in her vast book I read,
And in her breast rejoicing still I live.
Nature, abhorr'd of tyrants and of fools;
Nature, whose pure code impious man doth blur,
Accept th' oblations of my grateful heart,
And if thou canst not govern fate, let me
Repose in thy kind arms; give me at least

My health and liberty. To thee I pour
My matin prayer, grateful to the bright smiles 120
Of the all-seeing sun, and when he bends
His western way, in gentle sleep repose.
Still Nature love I that all anguish soothes,
That from blind artificial man arose.

Stupendous Italy ! the thought of thee
O'erwhelms the mind ; thy glory, genius, pride,
Thy conquests, and thy power, were stretch'd to climes
Known but by thy all-conquering sword, that now
Benumb'd in iron shackles lies ; the ghost
Of that dread power still walks abroad, and still 130
Dominion in th' eternal city holds ;
It wears a triple crown ; in vain have men
Striven to pull it down ; mankind will e'er
Gaze on the light that's not their own ; they feel
That in the unrelenting hands of Fate
They fast are tied, and call on Heav'n to cleanse
Their purblind eyes. Poor weak Philosophy,
To think mankind will e'er be led but as
Their hearts incline, for there the passions rise,
And as the whirlwind blows they're drifted on 140
The gale, and to the stars they look to steer.
Religion, like the dove, doth ever bring
The olive branch, to sooth their troubled souls ;

A thousand hues may glitter on her plumes,
But still she covers all 'neath her wide wing.

Far to the south, o'er rugged hill and dale
Black wreaths of smoke ascend from the hot lake
Of Monte Cerbole; foul sulphureous smells
Taint the pure mountain gale, the traveller thinks
He wends his way into the entrance dark 150
Of Stygian pool; a mountain torrent there
Runs down, and, passing o'er the bubbling caves,
In many boiling cauldrons foams, twice hot
As water made by artificial means,
Whirls round its dark and pitchy wave, which rose
Like a Medusa's head, curling, writhing,
With a dense smoke, hissing as loud and fierce
As though a chorus of the snakes of Hell
Were heard through the deep caverns of the earth;
And when the water is drawn off, and leaves 160
The cauldron dry, the list'ning ear might deem
That Vulcan was at work, blowing with force
His bellows vast, reeking with sweat and dust,
While his inconstant, blue-eyed, laughing dame,
Frolick'd with Mars in amorous dalliance,
And all around Nature's bright aspect seems
Burnt to a cinder, her kind look defac'd.
Rugged and stunted trees, stripp'd bare of leaves

And hollow, lean about ; no herb is seen
To grow, no bird to fly, and beasts with dread 170
Skulk from the spot away. Heaven's water pure,
Whene'er it pours from the o'ercharged clouds,
Can ne'er refresh or fertilize this soil,
But boiling bubbles up, and fiercer feeds,
Like fuel, the internal flame that burns ;
And yet nigh-hand, Nature resumes hër smiles,
In richest robes array'd, luxuriant there
The foliage of the oak crowning the crest
Of the grey, rocky dale, shades the light spray
Of the clear torrent from the noontide sun. 180
Sweet odours rise from aromatic herbs,
Mingled with fern trod by the nimble deer,
And every forest plant there riots wild.
This is a hallow'd spot, by wand'ring feet
Unhallow'd never trod : so many paths
Turn devious, none but th' instructed know
The clue which to the Sibyl's grotto leads ;
But all day long with hopeless toil may stray,
And plunge at night in the dark forest's gloom.
Deep in the sacred grove a verdant lawn 190
In Nature's liv'ry cloth'd, some roods extends,
By daisy, crocus, pansy spangled o'er,
And violet breathing forth its odours sweet,

And cowslip, and pale lily, virgin like,
That droops its modest head seeking support,
Mingled with savory aromatic thyme.
Round the grey rock of the arch'd grotto play'd
The eglantine, and in the centre stood
An altar hewn of yellow marble, such
As boasts Sienna. Near a basin clear, 200
Fed by the streams that from cascade above
In fleecy flakes descended, midst the rocks,
Mirror so clear, that there the wood nymphs might
On their own beauties gaze well pleas'd ; the goats
That brows'd around for satyrs might be ta'en,
As on their hinder feet erect they stand.
The cuckoo, bird of omen, startled oft
The newly married swain ; the raven hoarse,
And melancholy owl, the Sibyl's spells
Enforce ; yet oft the nightingale pour'd forth 210
Her rich and varied note, sweetly attun'd
To streams that murmur'd near. When sultry day
Was spent, the Sibyl oft would move with step
Majestic, like a goddess, in the light
Of the moon's silv'ry beams, to seek repose
From her long toil, that through futurity
Could pierce ; and well did she the offspring know
That quicken'd in the dreaded womb of Fate.

Within her grot hung singing shells, that sweet
Harmonious music wafted to the ear ; 220
And couches soft with every moss inlaid ;
And marble basins, catching trickling drops
Of water, purer than the rain, more cold
Than winter e'er could freeze ; and near the spring
Stood the dread urn, pregnant with fate : from this
(A vase of porphyry form'd,) she drew the leaves,
Whereon the mystic words of destiny
Were writ. Nought here was plainly told, but fate
Was oft in riddle hid, by which the mind,
Awaken'd, saw what it ne'er saw before. 230
By deep affinities she work'd, that are
The darkest part of our dark being, and still
Ever unknown to us encompass all.
To these affinities she held the clue,
Unravelling all the passions one by one.
Her own dread atmosphere affected all
Around : and every peasant, far and near,
Confess'd her mighty throne, and homage paid,
More than if she a temporal sceptre bore.
Four times a year, when seasons chang'd, she held 240
Her rural court, and all the damsels round
About did then attend ; twelve chosen were
All virgins, clad in white, and crown'd with flowers
And leaves. On each May-day the Sibyl sat

Upon her grassy throne, with Nature's new
Embroider'd carpet, 'neath her feet, and o'er
Her head a lofty oak extended wide
Its tender leaves; the birds their music gave,
And sang their new returning loves. And now
The rustic shepherd's pipe, sweet as in far 250
Calabria charms the ear, or such as Rome
Oft hears at Christmas tide, with melody
Waking at dawn the sleeping artizans;
The type of that Hosanna that was sung
By Bethlem shepherds to the God-born child.
And here the shepherds tun'd their warbling lays,
The chosen damsels near advanc'd to crown
The Sibyl's graceful brow with a gay wreath
Of choicest flowers, and at her feet then lay
The firstlings of their flocks, young kids and lambs, 260
And o'er her shoulders throw an ample robe,
Of purest wool, their rustic hands had wove;
Her feet were with new sandals shod, their knives
Had carv'd; and now the rustic dance began,
They sung in chorus to their nimble feet.
The Sibyl from her grassy throne descends,
And from the vase the leafy lots she draws;
The damsels cluster round, with downcast eyes
They trembling wait their fate; to right and left
The lots she gives; one sportive maid the rest 270

Above, she folds within her arms. Oh, nymph !
Receive it not, it is the kiss of Death
That seals thy fate upon thy joyous life :
For death comes smiling oft in midst of joys,
Rejoicing hurls his dreaded dart, and leaves
His victim then destruction's mark. Oh, Death !
In terrors art thou cloth'd, what stricken hearts
Are left behind unstruck as yet by thee,
But pierced with cruel anguish and regret.
The lots received, now every heart is fill'd 280
With expectation high : darkly they tell
What cannot be reveal'd in light ; for Fate,
Cloth'd in the darkest robes, sits on a throne,
Encompass'd by the blackest shades of night.

When Ceres clothes the fields in her rich robes,
When waving corn low bows its heavy head,
And countrymen prolong the midnight toil,
Seizing with joy the golden prize, reward
For winter's labour, and the stubborn earth
Oft till'd, again the Sibyl mounts her throne, 290
Crown'd with the spiky corn ; in new robes cloth'd
She whispers the decrees of Fate again ;
Each maiden's heart doth palpitate. And when
The ripe grape's pluck'd on oozing baskets heap'd,
Which milk-white oxen drag on groaning wain

To the full press, again in rustic state
She sits, crown'd by the blushing grape. For her
The forest boar now bleeds, his black flesh smokes,
And hares, and quails, and partridge plump, with all
Pomona's tribe, to deck her ample board, 300
And the rich wine prolong the orgies late,
Till the sun, rising, puts to shameful rout.
And merry dames and laughing nymphs, now fill'd
With present joy, deride their future fate,
Deride the sacred grove, for Bacchus wags
His jolly face: he, mighty leveller,
Drowns every care, with it all dignity;
The king will roll from his high throne, and place
The peasant there. Thou, mighty God of wine,
The conqueror of the world, with Venus you 310
Divide its universal rule, all hail!
For both more joyous are than blithesome day.

Softly and swiftly glided o'er the wave
Hermione; in th' orient sky she saw
The saffron flood extend, rising above
The Adriatic waves, on twilight quick
Encroaching, in a huge half circle form'd,
Each instant glowing more intense, until
Sol shew'd his dazzling face, gleaming in midst
Of golden locks profuse; but still he wore 320

His night-cap of thick sable clouds, which soon
He doff'd, and then he rose triumphant o'er
The shades of Night, sole light supreme, waking
Recumbent life to life refresh'd : he drank
Thirsty the freshest dew. The little bark,
Its course now run, yielded its precious load.
On fleetest courser, then the ladies sprang ;
And ere the noontide sun had shot his rays,
Hermione is clasp'd in Azzo's arms.

Again he feels her throbbing heart, again 330

On her vermilion lips warm kisses prints ;
Then by her hand, he gently took his love,
And to her bower he led her to repose,
In peace, in sweet security, and joy

Supreme, which e'er doth flow when lovers meet.

At length, from balmy sleep refresh'd, she rose,
Her cheek deck'd with carnation's hue, the blush
Of health and joy ; for health and joy expand
Our being, when ev'ry vein and artery
Is flushed with the red tide of life and hope. 340

Joy nestled in her breast, for all within
Was calm repose ; such bliss is Heaven on earth.

Ere three days pass'd in conversation bland,
And sweet discourse of mutual love, and high
Decrees of Fate, that erst had led their steps,

Azzo, with sorrowing mien her thus address'd :

“Hermione, sole partner of my joys,

Alarms, and councils, list, and ponder well

On what I now propound. The fates frown on

The League ; in vain in battle fierce we pour 350

Our blood, in vain resist the tyrant, yet

Mantua falls not ; nor will it fall, its walls

Will stand unconquer'd ; yet, do all submit,

Weary of hopeless war ; the chiefs all seek

Repose, their troops disband ; my lands now lie

Ravag'd, my castle sack'd ; how vain are then

The hopes of man ! how vain his efforts, when,

Unblest by God, then adverse fate will frown,

And chill our hearts with long retarded hope.

Then every step is vain we take, thus led 360

Astray, in vain our will ; in vain we strive

Against the awful fates ; great virtue may

Our names adorn, and recompense may gain

In fame ; the crown immortal may obtain,

Of bliss eternal ; without other aid,

Success will ne'er our highest efforts crown.

Hermione, now list to my behest :

Far to the west, there dwells, in lonely grot,

The Sibyl of Volterra ; great I ween

Her fame, for the dark future she foresees ; 370

To her I will appeal, and pray her aid,
For aids mysterious hang 'twixt heaven and earth."
To him Hermione then thus replied :
" Oh, Azzo, impious 'tis to seek to know
The will of Heav'n : with holy care 'tis ours
To wait Heav'n's time ; we must obey, nor dare
Repine. Wherefore wouldst thou a sibyl seek ?
That sorceress sure would thee beguile ; seek then,
Rather in deep humility and love,
God's holy altar ; humble thy proud soul, 380
Nor pitch thy thoughts so high : such thoughts bring care,
When man's vain wishes tower above the stars.
When with vain efforts he would soar aloft,
And shun the middle way, again to earth
He's dash'd, to prove he was a son of earth.
Thee, Azzo, I conjure by all thy vows
Of love, by all the tender ties that hold
My heart to thine, submit, nor dare the will
Of Heav'n to brave. Seek no assistance, save
That from above. Dark powers do prowl the earth,
To darkness they're allied ; consult them not, 391
For in eternal darkness they will plunge
Thy sinning soul. I tremble now, and feel
As if my heart were torn in twain ; dark shades
Arise before my eyes ; I see no way

Beyond this frightful haze. Oh, pause, before
Thou plungest both our lives in one sad fate !
Oh, Fate, inexorable and unmov'd,
Whose icy hand doth often nip the buds,
The flow'ry blossoms of our hopes, and freeze 400
Our lives before the frost of years comes on !
Conquer'd was Azzo by her accents bland.
He then resolv'd in strongest castle straight
The fair Hermione to place, and strive
The forces of his friends to rally. Soon
Assemble all the chiefs, and council hold
To carry on the war, and strive to fan
Again the flame of late so nearly quench'd.

Now on their journey once again the Est',
And the fair partner of his care set out, 410
With gallant cavalcade of knights and squires,
And jocund dames around : they scal'd the heights
Of Appenine, and on Volterra then
Direct their march, passing o'er many a dell
And rugged mountain, fring'd with hoary oak,
And chesnut grey, and loud resounding fall
Of mountain spring, the patient mule, with foot
Surer than man, climb'd with its heavy load.
Sometimes they pass o'er shelving rocks, on paths
Broken and narrow, and look down a depth 420

That may turn dizzy e'en the coolest head ;
And oft the evening sun shone on their spears
And armour of the knights, for they're constrain'd
Onwards to pass, weary, faint, and hungry,
From hostile Ghibelin ward safely assail'd,
By many coarse and ranc'rous bitter tongues.
Sometimes in holy convent were they lodg'd
Most welcome guests, and then in castles with
Their friends the long day's toil was soon forgot,
And drowsy sleep chas'd from the night (prolong'd 430
In next day's halt), by high debate upon
The fortunes of the League, washed down by flasks
Of ruby wine, and boastful pledges, when
In tented field they once should meet again.
Sometimes they listen'd to the troubadours
Striking the harp in hall, and chanting wild
The notes of their romantic songs. From France
They came, where shoots the rapid Rhone
His dark blue waves : land of the song and dance,
And joust, land of inconstant hearts, and land 440
Of fluttering easy love, that lightly comes,
Then soon is gone ; ever on mischief bent
With sparkling eyes and sprightly tongue, her sons
Rather to shine than to uphold a cause,
Death fear not, for constancy they have none,

With honour's trapping's ever satisfied.
None are than they more brilliant in the field,
More courteous none in hall : well can they rein
The maneged steed, and poise the lance, and fence,
The falcon at the quarry fly, and well 450
Their warlike harness wear ; but grandeur stern
And simple, e'er with the three graces dwells
Of European land, Spain, Italy,
And Greece ; oh, may their banners wave on high !

On Rocca Sillona's towers the moon
Her beams had shed, and now the cavalcade
Ascends the cattle-crested steep : a league
Or more they mount the weary way 'neath rocks
And groves that nod above : the tinkling bells
Of the slow mules give note of their approach ; 460
The sentinel on barbican loud hails ;
The watch-word is approv'd ; the massy gates
Unbarred, and draw-bridge falls ; the knights dismount.
The dames now from their litters come, and warm
Embrace, and cordial salutation greet
The guests. Twelve hundred chosen men here keep
The watch and ward, liegemen unto the League,
All tried and true, both greybeards and young squires ;
And store of noble dames and damsels, found
A refuge in this dovecote from the hawks 470

About. In the deep caves below were hid
Their treasure, for none dar'd abide the frown
Of Rocca, which around did scowl, e'en on
Volterra's walls; here the night-watch could view
The moon-beams play with placid smile upon
The distant sea; they every mountain path
Could well descry, and every beacon know,
From Pisa's tower to far Sienna's heights.

Three days the master of this ward, a chief
Of Guelphic party, with good cheer and mirth, 480
'To his new guests a courteous welcome gave.
Within the castle walls wild revelry
Doth reign; without, the chase renews their toil.
But Azzo's breast could not confined be;
Nought did he dread, save Fate's all chilling hand,
Most felt in quiet life; this sober state
He now disdain'd, and quick resolv'd to run
A new career; to seize his harp, and, like
A minstrel, wander up and down, to rouse
To arms the slumb'ring League, to sing aloud 490
Their former triumphs, and bewail, alas!
The tyrant's giant steps, to sing in sad
Lament that bloody rule. His eye now roll'd
In phrenzy, and inspir'd he swept the chords
With lofty voice attun'd, chanting the lay

Of war, while an holy madness gleam'd
Upon his visage ; prophet, warrior, chief,
He shone. Whate'er of th' etherial fire
Can pour on man he then receiv'd ; for man
Conveys decrees divine, and scatters them 500
Over the earth ; oft are they scatter'd wide
In prophet's voice, or poet's song, and oft
From warrior's sword they flash the lightning dread
Of God, that blazes through the world, and hurls
Fate down on our astonish'd heads, sweeping
Our fortunes drifted on Fate's current dread.

Hermione the inspiration caught ;
She urg'd him now his destiny to try ;
Urg'd him aloud to strike the magic harp,
And with a soul-inspiring voice awake 510
Half sleeping virtue, now absorb'd in fear.
" One voice," she cried, " may change the fate of men ;
One voice may a whole nation save ; if God
In that voice whisper, its weak sounds shall swell
And float on every ear, and every breast
Inspire. Fly, Azzo, now, fly from my arms ;
Invoke the manes of thy fallen friends,
Avenge their cruel death, restore those now
To light who in dark dungeons groan ; around
Flit weeping ghosts, their moans breathe in the air, 520

And in each whispering breeze for vengeance call.
Eridanus flows blood ; upon his shore,
Unburied lies many a noble corse.
Heav'n calls within our heart, obey that call.
Oh ! shall a hero tamely sit unmov'd
When Nature's in revolt, and on him calls ?
Behold Italia ! Nature's fav'rite child,
In chains behold her, smear'd with gore, and gash'd
With many a ghastly wound ; she weeps, she clasps
Her hands, dishevell'd floats her hair, that droops 530
Like willow tree ; she mourns in deepest woe.
Grasp now thy sword, and shake thy spear, and mount
Thy steed ; fly o'er th' embattled plain ; o'erthrow
The tyrant's ranks ; or, if thy legions wait,
Now seize thy harp, and with heroic song
Arouse all Nature's host to follow thee."
She ceas'd ; vengeance sat on his lofty brow,
And warlike fire flash'd in his sparkling eye.
Indignant, and in louder strain he rais'd
His voice ; with rapid hand he swept the chords. 540
Attir'd as troubadour forth then he went ;
Deep in the sacred grove the noble Est'
Now plung'd, soon in the mazy lab'rinth lost ;
And, to beguile an hour away, he struck
His harp, the trembling chords sweet harmony

Send forth, the hov'ring birds first hark his strain,
Which then, with their own jealous notes, they drown.
With step majestic, yet with lowly mien,
Azzo beheld a goddess in the grove,
Wending her graceful way to him ; when she 550
Approach'd, awe seiz'd his soul ; superior she
To mortals seem'd ; her fore-locks parted were
On her broad ivory front sublime ; they fell
In graceful ringlets of rich chesnut hue,
And o'er her neck and shoulders wav'd ; her eyes
Weresparkling grey, that pierc'd him through and through,
Yet seem'd as if they oft could melt the heart
To love, or glare with wild and holy rage ;
From them the lightning e'en might learn to flash.
Her breast, in which were nurs'd a thousand loves, 560
Proclaim'd her woman in her mid-day bright.
She wav'd her hand with grace all eloquent ;
In simplest robes was dight her form, nor gem,
Nor purple dye, nor curious wreath display'd,
For awful beauty sets all wealth at nought,
Deck'd by warm blood, and all enrob'd in grace.
With downcast, modest look, the hero then
Approach'd the Sibyl ; she of fate the dread
Expounder is, and greater awe commands
Than kings ; her power is from the power above. 570

“Azzo of Est”, in vain,” the Sibyl said,
“Thou wouldst direct thy steps from me; Fate hath
Ordain’d that from my lips thou shouldst truth hear:
In vain avoid what mighty Fate ordains;
Thy will may struggle hard, thy hopes may strive,
And thine eyes dazzle with illusions bright;
Wild fancy e’er may play about thine heart,
Remorse may gnaw, and grief may sink thy breast,
For this thy spirit holds, untangible,
Uniform’d, that knows nor space nor time, that life 580
Which mortals feel; they fancy in this life
Ideal, they can move about at will;
Weak mortals! ’tis but as a favour shewn
To mark their double being, to give them hopes
Of what they may expect beyond the grave.
Their will cannot th’ eternal order e’er
Impede; the universal soul must be
Obey’d, working through Nature with motion
Perennial, and minutest wheels, the scale
Of influences then begun; of these 590
I’m one; prophets have ever held the space
’Twixt man and spirits, unbounded in our
Vast world; as great variety as here
Thou seest in Nature’s works, so great be sure
Is the variety of spirits, e’er

To thy dim eyes invisible ; these are
The hidden wheels of Fate which roll along
Your all unconscious lives. In sacrifice
Doth Fate delight, nor canst thou gain each wish.
Oh, Est' ! great grief and greater glory are 600
In store for thee ; thy soul with ardour glows ;
Thou seekest now e'en to the glitt'ring stars
To mount ; the wrath of Heav'n must be appeas'd.
Glory and Love together will not wend :
Virtue must be thy guide, ere thou a crown
Of deathless fame shalt wear ; but passion oft
The soul obscures, pale Fear impedes its steps,
That like a giant e'er should stride, with Death
Close at its side, by his uplifted dart
Still unappall'd. Such now I tell thee are 610
The high decrees of Fate ; so steel thy heart,
Already tender made by woman's love."

Azzo lent ear, and with deep horror chill'd
At her bold words, he thus essay'd reply :
" Who art thou ? say, that speakest in this sort,
As though two worlds were blended now in one,
And thou stoodst 'twixt them both, their mystery
To me explaining ? Thy bright loveliness
Doth thee betray a woman born, and I
Could gaze upon thy charms, that are like those 620

Of goddess fabled, as of yore ; thy hair
Luxuriant curls o'er thy voluptuous breast ;
Thy form declares both majesty and love ;
The wild-fire of thine eyes freezes my blood ;
Thou gazest, as if hither thou hadst come
On earth from the dark gloomy realms below ;
Thy stormy soul stirs now within thee. I
Beseech thee, then, oh, Sibyl, torture me
No more with thy ambiguous words ; I stand
Fearless before thee, here to know my doom." 630

Pale Fear now quitting his bright looks, erect
And bold the hero stood, and sniff'd the air.
He who in battle oft disdainfully
Had look'd, now smil'd on Fate ; the courage high
Of his proud heart beam'd in a brilliant flame
From his fix'd eyes ; with rage the Sibyl's breast
Was swell'd, and all the god within her stirr'd.
A crimson blush now flash'd across her cheek,
As clouds of sudden storms darken the sky.
Her hand she held aloft, which did the winds 640
Allay ; hush'd were they while her voice she rais'd,
And even ev'ry whisp'ring breeze was lull'd.
All nature seem'd appall'd, save mighty Est' ;
His courage and his manly form disarm'd
Her mighty rage ; nor was she now betray'd

In accents more precise and clear, his fate
To tell. Unbending then her lofty brow,
Dismissing quick the fury of her eye,
She gently took his hand with softest tones
Of languishment, then to her grot she led. 650
Of goddess half and woman half was she ;
Her soul was more ethereal than the souls
Of mortals are, yet was she doom'd to die,
For she still mortal was ; within her breast
Deep inspiration glow'd, that over man
Gave her command, yet she was woman born,
Whose destiny is love, for love doth reign
Triumphant ; women do not every call
Obey, nor can they every call resist.
Those dark affinities that in our breasts 660
E'er dwell, draw us to one another ; oft
They do not meet, but when they do, their force
Resistless is ; years might have roll'd, and ne'er
The Sibyl might be mov'd ; but Love, that ne'er
Can be controll'd, her inspiration calm'd ;
Awhile it hush'd her deep prophetic voice,
In that same breast divine to light the flame
That all consumes ; a hero now before
Her stood, whose deeds and fame fill'd her with awe ;
Whose manly beauty, and whose noble mien, 670

Fill'd with delight ; whose fate she knew, and well
She knew that fair Hermione had fast
Entwin'd about his heart, and held him still
A captive slave ; this thought alone had fir'd
Her mighty breast. The Sibyl now, alas !
Doth woman prove ; and inspiration high
To softest languishments and amorous sighs
Now yields ; and Nature still o'er high Fate rules ;
For Fate's the application of her laws ;
E'en the interpreter of Fate to Fate 680
Did now succumb, and e'en a Sibyl falls !

Three days within her cave he heard her vows ;
With rapturous ear he listen'd ; ne'er had he
From woman heard such lovely accents flow,
Such strains of wisdom ; darkly had he gazed
Upon mankind ; nought but their actions saw ;
Nought but their actions felt ; and nought he knew
Of the deep passions but their boiling force :
Now he beheld their subtle knot untied.
Then high discourse of Nature's works she held, 690
And Nature's universal soul, that quickens all.
Nature a vast connected mass she shew'd,
Full in each part, no void ; together all
The universe was join'd ; a sunbeam joins
The sun to earth ; the moon doth rule the tides ;

And hope doth join our souls with other worlds.
All substance into spirit may be resolv'd,
And then again to substance may be form'd ;
Yet every atom makes a part (she said)
Of one vast, mighty whole, that never dies ; 700
Where life eternal burns with quenchless flame,
And e'er in stars innumerable glows.
Such is the world ; another yet we find ;
The human heart a world contains within,
And there we find a deity enthron'd ;
Virtue and Vice in struggle ever twin'd,
New born with every heart, and ne'er to be
Eradicated ; there sits pallid Fear,
And dread Remorse, foul gangrene fill'd with spite ;
And Envy, parent of all cruelty ; 710
And dastard Avarice, fearing each breeze ;
Rapacity, with bloody hands that tears
The bowels of the human race ; and e'en
Robbing the widow's and the orphan's tears ;
And tyrant Power, that ne'er will be assuaged
With everlasting thirst ; unquench'd by seas
Of blood ; and round these monsters' feet are twin'd
A thousand writhing snakes, that venom spit
In private life ; and with their slime each path
Make slippery. But in the human heart 720

Virtue is also found with all her train ;
Bright Valour, like a crested warrior, sits
Shining in coat of mail, sparkling his eyes
As if he heard the trumpet sound ; with heart
So brac'd that it can bound from world to world.
There meek and melting Charity abides,
Its drops of kindness show'ring on mankind,
Wiping away Affliction's tears ; her paps
With milk redundant flow o'er all the world.
Daughter of Heav'n ! far from the bigot's scowl 730
She shrinks, and blushing, throws her snowy robe
O'er nakedness, which sneering Scorn displays.
And there sits Justice too ; a matron stern
And sage ; unmov'd by tyrant's haughty frown.
Religion glowing with an inward flame
That wraps the heart around, that no disdain
Can it approach ; that knows nor space, nor time.
And Faith, in blessed Trinity, with Hope
And Charity is join'd ; no dogmas theirs
That wont to awe the trembling soul to right. 740
Religion is of love the point sublime ;
Of love ineffable, that mildly glows
Like the pale evening star, that draws the soul
To heights sublime with tenderness untold.
What is Religion ? not the croaking hoarse

Of ravens, that with man's base passions fill
Th' eternal voice, and with Heaven's thunder arms
Their venom'd spite ! Of dark affinities
Next spake she, how draws friendship unknown man
To man, how high souls together knit ; these, 750
These were the cords invisible of Fate.
The contrast betwixt Vice and Virtue then
She drew, the bane and antidote of states.
Virtue, the brightest gem that sparkles in
A crown, and Vice the loadstone that will oft
Down draw it ; that kings public servants were
Until man's baseness propp'd them up, and then
Their feet they planted on the people's necks,
And crush'd them to the earth ; (for tyrants sit
A horrid incubus on nations' breasts ;) 760
That they enjoy their short and fev'rish hour,
To sink to the dark shades below, 'midst hate
That never dies on earth, and fire unquench'd
Beyond ; a terrible and hopeless doom
Awaits them, and their mem'ries ever live
In curses ever green ; green are the wounds
They've dealt, and fresh they ever seem, for we
May feel such soon. " This," cried she, " is the doom
Of tyrants, for they do usurp high rule,
And mock the highest ; Fate their free will aids ; 770

Blind on their dreadful destiny they rush ;
Tyrants alone from every amnesty
Exempted are condemned to hopeless doom."

Exhausted now with high discourse they were.
Azzo beheld another cave within,
In which was spread the Sibyl's board ; wood nymphs
Attend her, then with torch of blazing pine
Usher them in ; the savoury meats high smoke,
And messes rich of aromatic herbs,
Game, fish, and the black, tusky boar, and snipes, 780
With beccaficos, ortolans, and store
Of fruits ; the luscious grape, and melon ripe,
Sweet oozing fig, wild woodland strawberry,
With jars of cream, and flasks of ruby wine.
Late in the night they both prolong the feast ;
Charm'd by harmonious words, in her sweet smiles
The hero solace found, and all his toils
Forgot, and anxious cares, for love and awe
Together fill'd his ardent breast ; he sat,
And wonder'd at the magic scene around. 790
Her grot all twinkled, with each varied stone
High polished, shining far beyond all art
That could from bowels of the earth be drawn.
And many cooling springs did trickle down
The rock, and splash in marble basins round,

And in their gliding passage, all the notes
Of birds did imitate. No grove in spring,
Than these sweet waters fuller chorus heard ;
Sometimes they other notes would play, and flutes,
And hautboys, could not sweeter concert form, 800
And merry Echo held them company,
Mocking their pleasant mirth. A thousand flowers
Spontaneous grew as in perpetual spring,
And their sweet odours shed around ; nor near
This sacred spot could insects, reptiles, come.
In all her native luxury at rest,
Here Nature lay, and all was calm around,
All, save the Sibyl's breast, when it was fill'd
With heav'nly inspiration ; yet, still more,
It now was troubled by the dreaded imp, 810
Whose power extends o'er all this breathing world ;
Panting she sighs, and on the wings of sighs
Her loving soul did flee, and in her breast
All glowing left an aching void, which he
Alone could fill : their eyes confus'd, now met,
And in each other's arms they sank to rest.

Almighty Love ! that rules our destiny :
The wise thou lead'st astray, and sybils e'en,
And heroes conquer'd are by thy bright arms ;
No panoply can these resist, to thee 820

Sages submit, and haughty wisdom is
All mean and vile, when thee it would persuade.
Hail, then, to thee ! for thou consolest us,
Ere we are wrapp'd in shades of night eterne.
Thy joys so great have been, we think they must
Endure, for glowing love can never die.
That night of shades and horrors, dread and dull,
May follow'd be by a bright radiant morn.
All hail ! thou feedest hopes of joy eterne !

Once had Sol sank on Thetis' breast, and there 830
Had laid his glowing cheek ; Azzo this time
Had on the Sibyl's breast reposed, then up
He sprung from his deep trance ; on him she breath'd
Her inspiration, which stream'd from his eyes.
Again he seiz'd his harp, the chords he struck,
Her inspiration wild he gave her back.
Drunk with delight he was, and brac'd his heart
So tight, that buoyantly it over rode
The world. She saw the rising storm, she saw
Wild phrenzy in his eye, and when he stay'd 840
His rapid burst, his fury to her breast
Back ebb'd, their souls had mingled been ; and each
From high collision glow'd, and sparkled through
Their eyes. With mighty effort she essay'd
To speak ; her powerful influence govern'd all

Around ; the thunder burst with peal on peal ;
The trees all wav'd and bow'd, and e'en the grot
Shook to its centre, in the rising storm.
The Sibyl wav'd her hand, and all obey'd.
" Oh, Italy ! Oh, Italy !" she cried, 850
" Horrors on horrors thy horizon cloud,
Deep and unspeakable ; the hidden fires
Thou nourishest within thy bowels deep,
Will ne'er burst forth so fierce in lava stream,
As the dark storm of faction through thy land.
Ambition rears her bloody hand ; Rapine,
Like blighting hail-storm from the north, the buds
And blossoms of thy glory to the earth
Now beats ; strange tongues uncouth and hirsute locks
Disfigure thy bright realms, and far away, 860
On Danube pine thy youth, the spoiler serve
With their heart's blood, which flows but to cement
Thy shackles faster ; this shall be thy meed :
In climes barbarian chain'd to prison walls
Thy patriots lov'd shall sigh away their days,
For hell a tyrant's breast with venom black
Shall swell ; his sickly eye, and ghastly cheek,
Shall gloat upon his victims chill and wan.
Through tears of blood still shall thy genius gleam,
And many fronts sublime, with wreaths of bay 870

Be crown'd. The canvass glows, and marble breathes,
And lofty domes arise; thy voice attun'd
Shall sing to barb'rous ears, yet shall not lull
The fury of the storm that o'er thee hangs,
And bursts whene'er thou hailest Liberty,
That sweetest mountain nymph. Thy prow shall cleave
The wave awhile, then perish on thy beach.
For ages Fate has doom'd thou shalt not wear
The robes imperial, nor the sceptre grasp.
Divided thou shalt lie in thy warm sun, 880
In varied recollections live, that like
The flash of Heav'n shall flit across the scene
Of glories past, and at thy present doom
Shudd'ring, robb'd of thy glory, and laid low;
Without a head a trunk despoil'd thou art;
Sever'd in parts, and with disjointed limbs
Thou liest, alive these parts, still writhing in
Thine agony, the wreck of empires this.
Such is thy fate, once mistress of the world!"

She ceas'd, and panting fell o'erwhelm'd and faint.
Trembling he listen'd to her strains divine, 891
And saw the efforts of her mighty mind.
He felt that she had pour'd for love of him
Her voice prophetic; eager now he snatch'd
The Sibyl to his arms, and, all infus'd

With warm desire, she sunk upon his breast.
The torch of love is quickly lit at torch
Of warrior's ardent soul ; for Love and War
The brightest fires contain that furious rage,
Yet soon expire, exhausted, of themselves. 900

New and great fortunes thee attend, oh, Est' !
Since with the Sibyl link'd thy bold career
To run, thou shalt above the rest now soar ;
Vict'ry shall drive thee in her blazing car ;
Thy fame shall stream afar with dazzling light,
And chase the darkness of oppression's gloom ;
Mankind shall on thee gaze with wild delight
And wonderment ; thou, like the god of day
That fix'd the monster Python to the earth,
Shalt hurl the bloody tyrant from his throne ! 910

BOOK X.

O'ER Italy the silence of the tomb
Now reign'd ; mute grief sat heavy on each face,
And sighs, not words, escap'd through lips that hearts
Oppress'd no more could move, nor e'en could tears
Solace. But God this awful silence broke,
And from his seat of mercy, in a voice
Of thunder loud proclaim'd the war anew.
Since a new Pontiff wears the triple crown,
God whispers in his heart : He breathes around
The secret voice divine, and high his crook 10
The holy shepherd lifts, to drive this wolf
From out his ravag'd fold, now soak'd in blood.
Thus did the Pontiff the whole Church address :
" Perdition's child, a man of blood, of faith
An outcast ; Eccelino, imp of Hell,
The most inhuman 'mong the sons of men,
Born of the wild disorders of the age,
Tortures the people of these realms, o'er which

Ye spiritually preside, and binds
In chains of steel, with most atrocious bands, 20
The nobles, and the people massacres.
He hath all social bonds, and every law,
Religious, evangelical, now broke.
But we, of your salvation thinking e'er,
And, above all, of things that are of God,
To th' office of our legate to the League,
Th' Archbishop of Ravenna, our dear son,
Have called, that her functions now may fill,
That he may kindle high the zeal of all
The faithful, and with spiritual arms 30
And temp'ral too the tyrant may subdue ;
He will invest with symbol of the Cross
The faithful, that against the tyrant arm.
He shall encourage, and, as recompense,
The same indulgence offer, as the Church
Granted to those who to the succour march'd
Of Holy Land. Let him awake those men
O'erwhelmed by the sleep of death, and rouse
Those who for Virtue's sake will watch ; let him
Root out and scatter wide this crying sin, 40
And by that prudence that doth come of God,
According to our faith, let him promote
The honour of our holy mother Church,

Your soul's salvation, and your country's peace."
Thus spake the Sov'reign Pontiff to the Church.
Oh, great and glorious speech, when in the name
Of God, a war against man's enemy
Is preach'd; and when the Church pulls tyrants down.

Black, proud, and awful, frowns thy rocky steep,
Oh, Sestris! like to the Haram walls 50
Of Eastern clime, that prison'd beauties hold;
So thou Etruria guardest; safe within
She lies reclin'd, her radiant visage smiles,
E'en though her heart be sad; with flowing robe,
With vine leaves rich festoon'd, she's gaily deck'd,
And round her brow sublime she wears a crown
Of olive. The dark ocean swells and curls,
Like the swift coursers in the race, who o'er
Each other run, and as they reach the goal,
Burst in white foam with rage; in spiral wreaths 60
Their sparkling spray they toss, against thy rocks
Fierce driving, with perennial anger fraught,
At the wild wind's command; a thousand stars
A moment glitter in the foam, and then
Are quench'd; e'en so the waves of human tide,
That o'er the earth do roll, and chafe, and foam:
They rise and fall, like to thy waters bright,
Oh, sea, that never can be calm; for though

Asleep, the water seems a mirror blue :
Yet, ever and anon, a gentle swell 70
Betrays, that Thetis' bosom ne'er at rest
Can be. So swells the flux of human tide,
Of which each breast's a wave, that's driv'n along
By high Ambition, fierce Revenge, or Love,
Or Faith, that doth propitiate powers unknown.

High on a rock th' heroic troubadour
Sat melancholy ; as the storm arose
With joyous pride his bosom glow'd ; he struck
His harp, and loud attun'd his voice to seas
That roar'd around. In his wild phrenzy now 80
He saw the storm of battle rise again ;
He heard the dying groans, and the loud shouts
Of vict'ry, kindred to his martial breast :
And round him flock'd the hardy mountaineers,
Bold sons of poverty, still unsubdued,
Untam'd. He saw th' imperial eagle soar,
Then shoot athwart the stormy air, and plunge
Headlong into a dark abyss below ;
Then rise, and in her crooked talons strong
Bear off a lamb alive, and at the shouts 90
Of those around, let fall her prey, then flap
Her wings and fly. Now Azzo's soul was fir'd
At this great omen. " See," he sang, " she flies,

Th' imperial eagle flies, she leaves her prey ;
Rise, rise, my bands, and follow me !” A bark,
Now struggling with the waves and winds amain,
Came bounding o’er the wat’ry way, and rush’d
On her dark doom, quickly on rocks to split,
Then swallow’d be in angry Ocean’s jaws,
Roaring for prey ; the tatter’d sails, all rent 100
Like streamers, rustle in the bellowing wind,
And as the mountain pine uprooted falls,
So fell her mast with hideous ruin. Now
She struck, and into thousand pieces flew :
The raging surf threw back those pieces, from
The troubled ocean’s high swell’d breast, back on
The rocks ; with fury now they sudden flew,
And awful was the seamen’s doom ; more fierce
Than lion’s is the dreadful ocean’s roar.
The horrid scene did every heart acale. 110
High rising o’er the surging waves, one man,
Of all her crew more daring than the rest,
Scorning to sink or die, with manly heart,
Uprais’d upon the sparkling spray, high bounds
On shore, and on a mound of sand he lay,
Gasping for breath, yet conqueror of his life.
Oh, Christ, it was an awful sight, to see
The lifeless corses on the beach now thrown,

Mangled, and bruised, and torn by the sharp reef;
To see the hardy knight's dim eyes glance round, 120
As though he'd pass'd through life to death, and then
Had pass'd to life again, gazing on death!
Rinaldo of Ravenna he was call'd,
As stout a knight as in the strife of war
E'er gloried. Long and bravely had he fought
'Neath banner of Saint John, with caravans,
Against the Paynims; never was his face
Turn'd from the storm: from Rome's imperial walls,
He now had come to search for him of Est',
And bid him, in the Holy Father's name, 130
Again to war the leaguer'd chiefs to lead.
Azzo now quick approach'd the shipwreck'd knight,
Who rose, and, tottering, before him stood; each
On the other gaz'd with inquiring look,
Then each the other's name exclaiming, both
Embrac'd: new strength rush'd through Rinaldo's veins:
"Though shipwreck'd here I stand," he said; "I bring
A storm that will o'erthrow the tyrant's hopes;
A storm will blow, whose blasts o'er Italy
In shreds will shiver all their impious host, 140
Who dares the Cross oppose; the Church upholds
The League; the Holy Father a crusade
Hath from St. Peter's chair proclaim'd; each heart

Will arm each hand, and Est' shall lead the League."
As when from dismal dreams we sudden start,
Oppress'd with hideous incubus that seems
To clasp our dying being, struggling we strive
To shake the horrid monster off, ourselves
We find on our soft downy bed, our eyes
Joyous we open, new life exhaling, 150
Up then we rise refresh'd; thus started Est'.
Aloft to Heav'n he rais'd his grateful eyes,
And saw the scud swift drifting to the north;
"Thus," he exclaim'd, "shall soon our legions fly,
Each other chasing in bright glory's race;
Again in battle shall I stand, and view
A hurricane of war, and whizzing darts,
Like the wild gale that thee, Rinaldo, toss'd
Ashore: so may the billows of the war
Toss me at last as safe as thou art now. 160
If not, then let me perish in the shock,
Nor live to see the tyrant lord it more."

"Away!" Rinaldo now with fury cried,
"Away, quick to Ravenna; there to meet
Th' assembled League; stern Mars shall shake again
His dreadful spear, and war from his red crest
Shall stalk once more, sending each instant ghosts
Down to their black abode; leaving above

Their mangled corpses the foul birds to feed.”
Thus fierce Rinaldo spoke, fiercest of souls 170
Found in Ravenna ; storms were his delight,
On which he look’d with joy ; the white sea-gull
Now flapp’d her wings, and scream’d above his head,
Hailing his kindred nature, that in storms
Ever would revel ; with delight the blood
Now flush’d his cheek, no longer chill’d by death,
And on he strode up the steep mountain’s side.

Swift as the bounding roebuck when he hears
The opening hound, and leaps from crag to crag,
Scaling the heights flow’ring in purple bloom ; 180
Scarcely his fading shadow from himself,
So fleet his step can now distinguish’d be ;
So Azzo up the mountain flew with breast
Hard breathing, and distended nostril wide ;
He Meleager seem’d, when in the chase,
At’lanta first the Calydonian boar
Had struck, fix’d to the earth by his sharp spear :
So Azzo then Rinaldo passed ; gazing
Around he saw the ocean’s broad blue wave
Unbounded in his sight ; no more he heard 190
Its troublous roar. From height to height, panting
They run, exhausted sometimes, sunk, with vein
And muscle swell’d, and glazing eye, whose fire

Is quench'd : " Oh, hold awhile ! " Rinaldo cried,
Exhausted, " Hold, lest down I lie and die ! " 200
O'er rocks a gushing torrent pour'd, and Est'
Quick seiz'd his friend and drew him to its fall.
Stream'd o'er his head the wave, and chas'd away
Hot thirst and fever ; the shock rous'd his limbs,
Trembling, with palpitating heart, which now
Regain'd their strength and courage high ; thus Est'
Restores his friend, and both sink down to sleep.

Three joyous days their rapid course they ran ;
They flew o'er mountain, vale, and rock and dell,
Where erst Pan tun'd his pleasant pipes to Faun
And Dryad, where with quaint lascivious look
Rising from ferny bed, the satyr oft
Would startle mountain nymphs, who, trembling, ran,
Yet now and then would cast a look behind.
La Spezia's bay they saw ; its mirror calm 210
The image of majestic mountains round
Unfolded to the view ; Massa, where oil,
In purest stream, pours down thy laughing hills ;
Carrara's dazzling quarry, which the eyes
Can scarcely fix, they left behind, and all
The labour of the wand'ring Luchese swain,
Who yet returns from foreign realms, to till
And toil upon his native rocks. Thy domes

And spires, oh, Lucca ! faded from their view,
Like to the shadow of a summer's cloud ; 220
Nor did they stay their steps to bend the knee
On Sion's holy earth, by sainted hands
From Palestine to Pisa's sacred field
Erst brought. Volterra, soon they reach'd thy heights,
And mounted once again the Rocca's steep,
And saw its watch-tow'rs frown : then Azzo cried,
" They hold the jewel of my heart, my life,
That now for which I breathe, I pant, I sigh."
Azzo's great heart in twain was rent ; one half
Belong'd unto his glory and the League, 230
The other half Hermione possess'd :
With glowing grasp, e'en stronger than his love
Of Fame. As when o'er placid water sails
The graceful swan, with downy plumage soft,
And bright as flakes of snow, and neck so lithe,
That writhes like snake, so did Hermione
Approach, and by her slow approach she seem'd
To chide her tardy mate ; and at her sight
The fire had left his downcast eye, which told,
With conscious shame, the secret love he had 240
The Sibyl borne. Her conscious instinct quick,
Flash'd to her cheek, ruffling her front serene :
But still her outstretch'd arms, full pardon gave.

As the young stag by hounds and horns pursued,
Rushes through brake and bush, and plunges in
The rocky dell, deep in a bed of broom,
And heath, or fern, and there he finds the hind,
She raises high her slender neck, her full,
Round eye, with timid, tender look, requites
His danger past; so Est' now refuge found 250
And tenderness, that all requites, and e'en
Forgiveness of the past; for perjuries
Of love oft venial are, renewing love
More sweet, and far they banish jealousy.
He gently took her hand, and to her bower
He led her, in her melting mood, glowing
With love; when woman yields a prize divine,
And yielding thus, she crowns her victor's brow
With fragrant myrtle wreaths, more joyous far,
Than laurel gain'd in the fierce bloody war. 260
How sweet to wander through the flow'ry paths
Of fresh accomplish'd hope; sweet to stray o'er
Gay fields at eve, and see the sun go down
On all our care, that ends with his decline;
Then rise refresh'd, no other care to fear,
Than what his daily course contains; the soul
In sweet repose: yet sweeter far, when love
Wraps round the trembling, doubtful heart, to crave

Forgiveness, seal'd by the impetuous gust
Of full-blown love. "Oh!" cried Hermione, 270
Panting on his warm breast, "such bliss as this
Not long will last. Oh, say what tidings now
Bring'st thou? Oh, tell me truly all that pass'd."
Azzo's most secret soul was mov'd; that soul
He open laid before his friend, for such
She was become. "Listen, Hermione:
On brink of Fate we stand; its dark, and deep,
And dreadful gulf, yawns wide before our steps.
I have the Sibyl seen; her dreadful spells
Have pierc'd my awe-struck heart; great glory is 280
In store for me, yet greatest sacrifice,
That human joy can quench." At these dread words
Hermione, with drooping head upon
Her breast, sigh'd heavily; then wildly round
She look'd, and bent her eye on vacant air.
She shriek'd, and fell; and when from her deep trance
She woke, like marble bust she sat, so fix'd
And motionless she seem'd in speechless grief.
And Azzo too fell speechless in a trance,
And in it saw Heaven's glorious portals wide 290
Open to view, emitting floods of light,
E'en purer far than in his noontide race
Phœbus emits, when o'er the torrid zone

He runs ; and mantled in the bright flood, forth
Hope came to view, in roseate robes attir'd,
Her eyes with pleasure sparkling, brighter far
Than evening star ; content on her smooth front
Serenely sat ; her streaming hair perfumes
Diffus'd, beyond what Araby could give ;
About her lips there play'd a smile divine 300
That mov'd the saddest heart to leap with joy ;
And in her beauteous hands, she held two crowns,
Of laurel one, and one of full-blown rose,
Which she did intertwine : her feet mov'd on
Th' ambient air, which did her heav'nly form
Sustain. Dazzling great Azzo's eyes she swell'd
His heart ; thus he in glowing accents spoke :
“ Awake, awake, Hermione, my love ;
Let joyous Hope now flutter thy cold breast ;
The Holy Father hath confirm'd me now, 310
As Captain of the League ; soon he thy vows
Will break, and then, in sacred marriage bands
United, we shall absolution full
Receive ; the League's success is sure, the crown
Imperial then will be my high reward,
As Sion's sacred crown grac'd David's brow ;
And it shall grace (be sure) thy beauteous front.
Th' imperial purple shall thy form adorn ;

Empress elect, all hail ! thee, I salute ;
And echo now the public voice, that doth 320
Arise, like ocean's roar ; for drifting waves,
Of men's breasts form'd, shall overwhelm and drown
Our foes ; and thou shalt sit upon a throne,
Exalted upon conqueror's spoils. All hail,
Thou beauteous dame, great partner of my fate !"

Hermione then rais'd her downcast head ;
Serious, impassion'd, now she look'd in guise
That dames of Italy doth most become ;
With them none can compare for serious port,
And grave demeanour mild, and movement slow, 330
But graceful, which a woman most adorns.
When such their guise, we deem them angel-born,
Lighting on earth to give us earnest sweet
Of what we may behold in Heav'n ; and thus
The dame appear'd, as if a ray of light
From Heav'n illum'd her eye, foretelling fate ;
With voice melodious, clear, and sweet, the soul
Of ardent Est' she curb'd : " The Sibyl thou
Hast seen," she cried ; " and now the dreadful words
Of her portentous tongue I feel. No crown 340
Imperial is for me, nor sacred ties
Dissolv'd, nor absolution meet ; I still
Am a nun unworthy ; my doom is fix'd ;

Again my broken vows shall be renew'd.
The wrath of Heav'n must quickly be appeas'd ;
The League must triumph, and thy fame must blaze.
Hermione again the veil must take."
She spoke, and clasp'd her hands in fix'd despair ;
The crystal tear-drop started from her eye,
And trickled down her pale and marble cheek. 350

Now every patriot breast beats high with hope,
All save Hermione's : the castle rung
With joyous cries, and lightly many a knight
Sprung to his seat. As when the winter snows
Thaw and dissolve from mountain's frozen top,
Flooding the vale, and sweeping o'er the plain,
So now each frozen heart was thaw'd, and flow'd
From ward and garrison ; warriors and dames
All to Ravenna bent their march. The Cross
Again is rais'd, the high crusade proclaim'd ; 360
Trumpets and cymbols clash, and rattling drums
Awake the Guelphs ; loudly the people shout,
" God speed the League, the Church, and Liberty !"
From hamlet, village, town, and loud acclaims
Fill the elastic air. What sight more grand
Than warriors in their march to take the field,
And hail'd with loud and universal joy,
Marching for Home and Liberty to fight !

Mountains before them sink ; when hearts are light
They over mountains bound ; from every part 370
The peasants throng'd the deafening cry arose,
“ God speed the League !” Azzo forgot awhile
His lady's love, his warrior's heart with fire
Was lighted up. Before Ravenna's gate
The Leaguers stood ; encamp'd around the wall
The joyous soldiers lay. Now through the gates
The splendid squadron and the cavalcade
Pass from Etrurian hills : on milk-white steed
Graceful she sat, the dame who ev'ry eye
Now drew, queen of all hearts she seem'd, 380
And now an Empress shone ; her barb was cloth'd
With azure velvet, o'er-emboss'd with stars
Of sparkling silver foil ; an azure plume
Wav'd on her lofty head ; the bridle rich
Was with the turquoise studded o'er ; her robes
Were white ; her purple mantle flow'd adown
Her graceful shoulders ; and around her brow
The sparkling diadem she wore, as when
At Est' awaking from her trance, she sat
In banquet hall. Beside her rode her knight, 390
Clad in the mail he wore in Parma's field,
And round his neck the much lov'd talisman,
Her blest beads, hung. Next follow'd knights, and dames,

Heralds, and trumpets, pursuivants, with all
The pomp of this great war ; all to the dome
Now bent their steps. Halted the pageant there ;
And whilst they rode along, the princely mien
All hail'd of Est' ; with witching grace he rode
A noble steed which passag'd on with fire,
And now and then rose high in firm curvettes. 400
Dark brown his coat ; with fiery eyes, and neck
Arch'd, and yet light ; breast full, and haunches long
And deep ; the saddle cover'd all his chine.
So strong he seem'd, like a vast elephant,
A tower he well might bear ; and yet so light,
A greyhound scarcely could from him escape.
His housings crimson were, and fring'd with gold,
With tassels hanging to the ground, and on
His silken bridle golden bells emboss'd
Tinkled, most pleasant to the ear. Fair hands 410
From every casement 'kerchiefs wav'd to him ;
All ladies eyes with rapture glow'd to see
A knight so brave, and all with envy view'd
His fair companion near, whose downcast eye
And melancholy mien none could divine.

Within the dome five thousand mail-clad knights
Assembled were, with surcoats rich, and crests
Of waving plumes, to hear the war proclaim'd

From holy Legate's lips ; and from the roof
Banner and pennon hung, in battle won ; 420
The Red Cross ensign o'er the altar stream'd,
By the holy Father bless'd : near on his throne
Sat the Archbishop, Legate of proud Rome.
On each side bishops, priests, and ministers
Of the Church, silent stand ; whilst others sing
The mass ; and in the sacred choir above
Warbled, with note melodious, holy nuns ;
And down the aisle lay legates of the League ;
Behind, in files, the warlike knights all stood,
And when they knelt at mass their armour rung, 430
And vict'ry deeply thrill'd each anxious breast.
The galleries aloft were fill'd with dames,
Who fervent pray'd for spouses, lovers, friends,
Brothers, and fathers, they might never see
Again ; for they had sworn to fight till death.
Without the church, the people knelt in crowds ;
And when the mass was sung, Azzo advanc'd
To the Archbishop's throne, and duteous knelt
To hear the Pope's behests to him ordain'd,
To lead his flock to fight for Italy 440
Against the enemies of God and man.
Rising, the Archbishop stood, with hoary locks,
The pastor of the flock ; and wisdom beam'd

From his mild eye, and from his visage shone
Meek charity, and love. With gentle hand,
O'er the knight's shoulders then he plac'd a scarf,
By the holy Father sent, and thus he spake :
" Oh, son, thou wieldest now the sword of God
And man against the tyrant, e'er sustain'd
By hellish wiles, for he a son of Hell 450
Himself proclaims ; he hath defac'd and maim'd
God's creatures here on earth, with fiendish spite.
Her mighty banner the Church now unfurls
The Cross ; 'neath it thou shalt to conquest march.
Oh, Italy, rejoice ! the Church is leagued
With Liberty ! God's people in their tents
Assembled are, as once in Israel.
Gideon hath girded on his sword, for God
Of power the centre is ; he to his Son
The tidings glad once gave, that he mankind 460
Should save ; his high behests now here remain
With Christ's vicegerent, peace whose mission is.
But Eccelino's breast's with venom fill'd
And power infernal ; peace to war, and war
To death, must now be chang'd, and fiercely rage,
Till heavenly concord be again restor'd."

Azzo arose, and thus in modest guise
He spake : " I now accept the mighty charge,

And pray the Lord of Hosts to guide my steps.
Man of himself is nought ; an atom he 470
In the vast world, and though his will be high,
That will shall never come to pass, unless
God leads his steps. Much have I toil'd and sweat,
Yea e'en a bloody sweat hath from my brow
Been wip'd ; much have I toil'd the League to lead
To victory ; hard have I striven to hurl
Oppression down ; the Lord of Hosts doth rule
The fight, and now he speaks in thunder through
The Church : impious it were to doubt success.
Farewell, pale Fear, thou shalt no more my brow 480
O'ercast ; God's holy spirit now I feel
That fills my veins, and arteries, and sets
In flame my blood anew. Oh, knights, we must
Now take the field, and hail bright Victory,
That like Aurora leads our way." He spake :
Then, like a goddess, next Hermione
Advanc'd ; she clasp'd her hands, and on her knees
At the Archbishop's feet she fell : " Hear me,"
With passion deep wrung from her deepest soul,
She cried ; " thy blessing, Father, I implore 490
On thy poor daughter ; wash my sins away.
Enlighten'd now, I've broke the fatal bands
Which drew me from the Church away, enthralld

By Hell." Then raising high her eyes that beam'd
Rays beatific, as if she the hosts
Of saints beheld, exclaim'd : " Oh, Christ ! again
Receive thy spouse, from Hell asunder torn ;
Receive a joyful sacrifice ; again
Thy sainted spouse, again a cloister'd nun.
Oh, hear my prayers and intercession pure 500
For the great League : fly from my breast all cares
Save for thy glory : now I leave this life,
Though not in death, awhile to live in grace
Elect. Azzo, to thy bright fame alone
I'm wedded ; now the nobler part of thee
With me remains, the mem'ry of thy deeds.
At matin and at vesper prayer, for thee
I'll Mary hail. I, a stray lamb, return'd
To the true fold ; witness, ye saints in Heav'n,
The sacrifice : come forth, ye priestesses 510
Of Christ, receive your sister, led astray ;
Come forth with outstretch'd arms, and to your shrine
Lead me, that I may now propitiate
My God !" She spake, and in the sisters' arms
She fell, a sacrifice to Azzo's fame. 515

BOOK XI.

TH' INFERNAL conclave met with wrath and high
Debate, on earth such glorious sacrifice
To see ; the Demon rose, and shaking off
His sloth, saw now a moment opportune
Divided empire to assert with Heav'n.
To him Hermione was lost, but still
Now on his son he cast his wistful eyes.
In Eccelino's breast the fiend found all
His soul infus'd, seditious he to Heav'n,
Like to his sire, now grew, urg'd thus by spite 10
Too fierce for mortal breast to bear without
The aid of Satan, which but to tyrants
Seldom he doth bestow ; but now he pour'd
In Eccelino's heart Hell's blackest gall,
Bitter, envenom'd, that fix'd him in firm
Resolve inexorable. Struggle dire
Is then 'twixt Heav'n and Hell, when tyrants wield
A bloody sword, and Satan doth sustain

Their arms, eager his harvest of fell souls
To reap. When tidings from Ravenna reach'd 20
Romano's ear, fierce e'en as Satan's his
Dark visage scowl'd, anger his thick brows knit,
And hate unfathom'd furrow'd his pale cheek.
Courage of demons, not of men, then swell'd
His mighty heart. Regardless of his fate,
His dagger then he drew; aloft he held
This sign of his portentous wrath; then on
The ground he stamp'd; in accents deep he call'd
Upon his mother's shade, him to assist
In this great crisis of his fate. "On me 30
Now deign to look, oh, thou great shade! for now
The powers above 'gainst me all stand array'd.
Their arms I fear not; my brave legions firm
Will stand, and damp their battle's fiery heat.
In the arch-priest more power lies than in all
Their vaunting knights, their boastful, love-sick chief!
But that fair sorc'ress hath left him now,
Despair will freeze young Azzo's heart, and nerve
His arm. Come, then, and let thy mantling flame
Appear, as when thou didst to Padua guide 40
My steps; when my soul drank hot Guelphic blood.
As when autumnal winds with murm'ring sound
Arise, and the sere leaf in eddies whirl,

The mansion shakes ; while, on All-Hallow eve,
Men, women, children, close flock round the flame,
The time beguiling with some dreadful tale,
So whistled fierce the winds, so started now
Fell Eccelino from his own appeal ;
For men most ruthless converse ever fear
With fallen spirits, and ever shudder at 50
The thought of Hell, where sits enthron'd, in all
The pomp of dire woe, the great absolute
Of ill. Stupendous thought ! divided rule
He holds with the great absolute of good !
The passions all personified, and there
Most gorgeously array'd around his throne
Attend ; each instant their swift messengers
On earth they send, and in each crevice glide
They open find of the frail human heart ;
And every instant draw a victim down 60
To people these vast realms, all with their crimes
Emblazon'd on their face most horrible,
That eye unus'd could not e'en dare behold.
On earth their crimes are hid within their hearts,
In Hell, as on device of heraldry,
Or scutcheon rich emblazon'd, crimes do glare
E'en on their visage ; there the murderer sweats
Big drops of blood ; the tyrant, haggard, wan,

Hung round with chains which his own victims wore,
Feels all their throes and pains; here Avarice 70
Dies every day of want; Hypocrisy,
In frosts and snows naked, runs with each vice
Deep mark'd. From these abodes of woe arose
Dread Adelaide; her awful form was wrapt
In Hell's most awful flames, on which no eye,
Save Eccelino's, e'er could gaze and live.
Her faded form was veil'd by circling flames,
Which soften'd her proud looks, yet mark'd the state
She once had fill'd; nor was her open front
Emblazon'd; she superior seem'd to shades 80
Of mortal woman, but yet not so high
As fallen angel; yet she look'd as if
Some pity she from her dread paramour
Had found, the partner of her bed, from which
A satellite of Hell had sprung, who dar'd,
Proud in his might, provoke the Church to war.
Such seem'd the shade of Adelaide; of her,
Th' adultress with th' infernal king; of her
Who dealt in magic lore; the power of speech
She had not; but before his eyes a skull, 90
Encircled by a bloody wreath, she held,
Announcing thus his death and fame. Sudden
She disappear'd; earth shook, high turrets rock'd

And fell, and Eccelino stood aghast.
To Hell his mother's awful shade return'd ;
Athwart the dim clouds of the fitful sky
She flew, and round her view'd torrents of fire
Pour with a hideous roar, like Terni's fall,
Or Niagara's with its thundering roll ;
They fall in vales of adamantine rocks, 100
Engulphing myriads of dark spirits, that shriek
With horror, and then sweeping off leave them
To wail in utter darkness at their doom.

As when some dire eclipse, portending wrath
And woes, obscures the sun ; red vapours shoot
Athwart the dusky sky ; men, cowering, shrink,
For all do darkness fear where all's unknown,
Unseen, unfelt ; then bursts the brilliant sun,
Cheers all anew, infusing life and joy :
Thus welcome came the army of the League 110
To Padua's walls ; each drooping visage there
Expanded with the smiles that hope doth give.
The golden Cross gleam'd high above the tent,
Where lay Fontana, legate of high Rome ;
For he, lieutenant was of Rome, though Est'
Led the crusaders ; to Carello now
Confided was the Paduan standard : he
A friar, himself had offer'd now to strive

To liberate his city ; he had fled
From Anseduno, of the tyrant's toils 130
(His nephew this) the worst. High Heav'n would weep
And blush at his deep crimes ; his cruelties,
Horrid and nauseous, hot from Hell, on earth
Ne'er had been seen before ; his victims were
The youth that from patrician loins had sprung,
Thus striving to arrest their race. His fate
Th' astrologers had falsely told ; he saw
Himself invested close ; to every gate
He runs, and tries the locks ; his soldiers then
He marshals to the walls. Meanwhile the camp 130
Is throng'd ; e'en friars white, and black, and grey,
All arm'd appear ; with noble Dandolo
Venetian archers come ; from Parma's walls
Came many knights and gen'rous patriot souls,
To hoist the cap of Liberty, and give
Their manumission to the Ghibbelin slaves.
Est', brilliant in his armour, seem'd to take
His orders from the holy legate's lips ;
Then on the tower of Bebbe all the bold
Crusaders march, and here assemble all 140
Their host ; here monks and priests were mix'd with ranks
Of savage soldiers, and here haughty chiefs
And war-bronz'd knights with citizens. All hail,

Thou wonder working Freedom ! that dost bring
Beneath thy wing all men, not sunk to brutes ;
Ennobling men, thou mak'st them demi-gods !

From every side men flock'd, and lay them down
'Neath shady trees ; the neighing steed all barb'd,
Tied to the lance fix'd in the ground, snorted
And paw'd ; and jovial dames rode into camp, 150
And leer, and laugh, and joke, and playful squires
Low whisper in their ear ; and scouts now mount,
Drinking the stirrup-cup, start off to watch
In front ; and knights their surcoats doff, and lay
Them on the ground, and sit beside, throwing
The leaping dice ; and files of steeds bring in
The new cut corn and grass in nets ; and chiefs
Each marshal their own bands, and warn them for
The rising sun ; careless, they think not it may prove
Their last ; but merry is the soldier's life ! 160
And night her sable wings threw kindly o'er
The earth ; all to sweet balmy sleep soon sink.

Scarcely Aurora's rosy car appear'd,
When the crusader's host, all marshall'd in
Array, as in a jubilee, move on
With song and shouts. They chanted loud the hymn,
" The Standard of the King's betray'd !" They swept
Along with nimble feet the city to

Assault at many points ; th' attack is made
From the last bridge e'en to Saint Michael's church. 170
With courage unsubdued they fought, whilst those
Attack'd a brave resistance made, so that
The earth was soak'd with the crusaders' blood.
The day was well nigh lost ; the friars had borne
Aloft a wooden cover'd way, like shell
Of tortoise ; they the Altenate gate
Assault. Soon from the tower above they pour
A fiery shower of sulphur, blazing pitch
And tar ; the flames quick caught the gate, which soon
To ashes is reduced. Ansedisio 180
His courage loses ; then a citizen
Him earnestly implores to treat, and save
The city from a dreadful sack ; but he
Replied by plunging deep into his breast
His sword, and spurn'd him from him like a dog :
So safe it is base tyrants to advise !
Then, mounting a fleet horse, he fled ; so quick
He through the city flew, none could arrest
His flight, though some a hot pursuit commenc'd.
Breathless, and cover'd o'er with sweat, he reach'd 190
Vincenza safe, again to glut his rage.
Into the city now the army bursts ;
Each gate is open thrown ; with friendly arms

When late for her deliv'rance tears of blood
She wept; though 'twas her friends deliver'd her, 230
Yet a vast charnel-house she soon became.

These are the horrors of ennobling arms,
O'er which bright chivalry will sigh and drop
A tear; let then the Muse here draw a veil.

Unhappy city, not e'en Feltri sack'd
By Eccelino, not Belluno's self,

Nor Trenta in rebellion seiz'd, nor thou,

Oh, Padua! with thy bowels for long years

By vultures gnaw'd, were torn as now thou art!

Vengeance upon thy head then fell, for thou 240

Wast Guelphic ward; yet, if Vincenza fell,

Whose mournful fate my song has told, 'twas from

Th' imperial German hate, and not from men

Whom zeal had led to take their Saviour's Cross.

Nor these, nor thou, had suffer'd as thou didst;

Thou now behold'st thy sons for their wealth slain,

Thou hear'st thy ravish'd damsels' piercing shrieks

And matrons' deep laments, whilst storms blow high

Of passions wild and hot; yet, seest thou too,

Thy prisons broken in the awful day: 250

For Freedom, like Aurora, now shone through

The storm; thy houses into prisons turn'd

Were open forc'd, and forth there came great crowds

Of men, of women, and of sucking babes ;
The victims sad of the blind lust of power.
Oh ! when again shall such another storm
Restore to light the victims now immur'd ?

Next day the legate thanks return'd to God,
For the great signal victory. He then
The men of Padua from the interdict 260
Absolv'd, which they had suffer'd long ; for all
Within the grasp of Eccelino had
Long time been excommunicate. With joy,
High functions of the Church and rites divine,
After long intermission, were perform'd ;
And concourse now on concourse to the dome,
With joyous hearts press'd eagerly to kiss
The legate's hands, and every prison near
Was broken ope, from whose dark sepulture
Pale victims issued ; each an argument 270
Most eloquent against despotic rule :
Each of half life soon diffus'd a double life
In other breasts, until the sacred flame
Of Freedom blaz'd, and shone its meteor dread,
Eclipsing e'en the sun. To phrenzy all
Were rous'd ; on every side th' alarm bells peal'd ;
On every steeple wav'd the flag ; the tide
Of human life flow'd like a river o'er

Its banks; wild anarchy roam'd far and near ;
Men sprung from earth, again they walk erect. 280
Now to his castle turns the noble Est' ;
His heart within him leaps to see once more
Its haughty towers and lofty battlements
Of war still frowning ; round about him flock
His friends and vassals all, and women scream,
And tongues of children lisp, " You're well return'd !"
Oh, joyous day, when every heart for joy
Leap'd high ; yet soon sank Est's, no more, alas !
He views the goddess that had minister'd
To him, that Hebe, bright and fair, and sweet 290
As May day morn, whose smiles shed tenderness
Around ; whose fragrant breath embalm'd the air ;
As with majestic step she mov'd along,
A thousand winged loves flew from her form,
And flutter'd round each panting heart, whose eyes
Were fix'd on her in speechless gaze ; alas,
She's gone, the fair Hermione is gone !
A moment Azzo sigh'd, a moment paus'd,
Till Freedom's trumpet blew her sharpest blast.
He heard Mars' furious car upon the plain 300
Thunder ; he view'd a throng of plumed knights,
And neighing steeds ; sudden he mounted, quick
Away he flew ; his brilliant form is lost,

Wreath'd by the tow'ring columns of the field,
Whose dusky volumes now hide all the host
That march and circle far and near in arms,
The bloody tyrant to dethrone, and cast
Down lawless foreign rule, the direst curse
That can mankind afflict, and stamp as slaves!

When Eccelino the first tidings reach'd 310
Of the great League's advance, he Mantua's siege
Abandon'd; but he knew that Padua's walls
Were with tried veterans bristled round, and fill'd
With warlike stores; his mind was calm; for ne'er
He thought that such a whirlwind would arise
To burst its bulwarks. On Verona then
He march'd; passing the Mincio's flood, he met
A breathless messenger: "Dread lord," he cried,
"The news I bring, Padua is lost; its walls
Have fall'n beneath the League." "Thou liest, false hound!"
He quick replied; "go, hang him on yon' tree; 320
There let him feed the carrion crow, such meed
From me foul treason ever shall receive."
But soon another messenger he meets;
More cunning he in private doth instruct
The tyrant of the city's fall, and shews
The storm which lower'd. No halt is made, but on
The march is urg'd. Ere yet in one forc'd march

The troops Verona reach'd, high o'er their heads
A raven flew, and on the standard perch'd. 330
The omen Eccelino did accept ;
But omens oft deceive ; this bird he thought
Brought woe unto his foes, nor did he think
That haply it might lead him to his doom.
If worlds of spirits exist, then omens are ;
Who shall presume their influence to despise ?
Or who shall draw the line betwixt this world
And that which is to it allied ? Still if
Body to spirit be join'd, and then unjoin'd,
Who shall presume to say what omen may 340
Appear ? The raven builds his solitary nest
On high, and ever in sequester'd spot ;
His broad black wing flaps in the twilight air ;
In melancholy grandeur lone he sits
In the vicinity of some proud hall ;
He loves near ancient families to dwell ;
The peasant ne'er disturbs his sacred nest ;
'Tis said, too, when some sacrilegious lord
Had chas'd him far away, no after good
Came to his health and house ; thus he doth dwell, 350
And death foretells, or sad catastrophe.
Now Eccelino's soldiers all receiv'd
The omen dread ; 'twas long since they had heard

The mass ; no priests they'd seen, save those that were
Tortur'd or hung ; churches their stables were ;
Convents their taverns, where in riot wild
They quaff'd the wine ; religion had they none,
Except their martial discipline ; no God,
Save their fierce chief. Yet man is anxious e'er
For hidden power ; so all the omen saw, 360
Or with affright, or hope ; to all great things
It promis'd. Soon the fatal news was known,
And in Verona Eccelino quick
A council summon'd ; then twelve thousand men
Of Padua are disarm'd. To Padua fast
Had Azzo flown with gallant train, and all
Ferrara's host : forwards they now advance ;
Before Vincenza's walls they meet the foe.
Azzo all brilliant shone as he was wont,
Save that his helm a branch of cypress wore 370
'Stead of a golden ear, as token sad
Of mourning, and to show his fix'd resolve
To win or deathless victory or death.
On a proud Naples courser mounted he
The vanguard led ; then with defiance high
Antonio Brosima, the Podesta
Of fair Vincenza, Est' assail'd ; his lance
Couching, he ran a fierce career ; but Est'

At him drove hard, with spurs in flank, and reins
That floated on his courser's neck, o'er him 380
He rode; his lance Antonio's corslet pierc'd,
And in his body broke; rider and horse
To earth were hurl'd; his blood allay'd the dust.
Rinaldo of Ravenna shouted now
Aloud, "Forwards, ye liege-men of the League!"
For he Florestan's place had newly ta'en,
Captain of Azzo's guard. Five hundred knights
Rush in, brilliant and boastful all, like stars
They twinkle; in the wreaths of dust, their spears
Broken, fly round; then with their swords a storm 390
Of blows they rain. From every side fresh troops
Rush to the furious fray. Rinaldo's sword,
Sharp and well temper'd, hews the helmet through
Of a fam'd warrior of the adverse host,
Marcabrun da Vivaro; through the skull
It pass'd scatt'ring his brains; he bites the dust.
The foe's back driv'n and constrain'd to fly.
Both parties breathe awhile; the trumpets sound
To rally scatter'd bands; and wounded men
Are borne along, and prisoners ta'en in fight. 400
The lawless host that fought now quit the field,
And in wild orgies plunge; the best of wine
They found, and Bacchus soon usurps the place

Of Mars ; they celebrate the jovial feast
Of harvest home, and every buxom dame
And laughing nymph, brown from their harvest toil,
Come in, and join the frantic dance ; they sing,
They shout, they revel ; Freedom leads their steps,
And Bacchus warms their hearts, and soft love crowns.
The harvest moon, modest yet bright, ne'er had 410
Such jollity beheld. This triumph soon
To sadness sinks, for fear flies in each breeze,
And lighting in the camp announces soon
Romano's dread approach : his legions march
Forth from Verona ; every column moves
Well order'd, and no skirmishers had they
In front ; the whisper of his warlike name
Suffices ; 'tis Romano comes ! he comes,
The Eccelino comes ! Quick as light scuds
Before the threaten'd storm, retreat the bands ; 420
And in the camp such tumult reigns, that Est'
Nor e'en the legate could appease ; but back
On Padua now returns the leaguer host.
In shameful route they fly ; crowds press on crowds.
In three vast columns Eccelino's tide
Of war rolls on ; Lombards, Piedmontese, and
Germans, preceded by his dreaded name :
Like sweeping mist this phantom dims the sight.

Like cackling geese the leaguers fly, and hide
Within their covert of intrenchments vast ; 430
Here draw their breath, and here they strive to calm
Their palpitating hearts. Padua, like Troy,
What woes encompass thee ! Volumes of smoke
Fill the dim air, and showers of sparks roll on
The wind ; the people fly like timid deer,
And frighten'd mothers hung all o'er with babes
Look shudd'ring round ; they scream, and panting, fall.
Sheep bleat, and oxen low in their burnt stalls ;
The corn stalks blazing throw their light around,
And mulberries feed the increasing flame. 440
" Romano comes, the Eccelino comes !
The flames of Hell he brings on us !" all cry ;
And many swore they saw his mother cloth'd
In flames precede his dreadful march, and sail
'Twixt earth and Heav'n, flashing through clouds of smoke.
O'er embers hot of devastation vast
His army moves. " I'll burn the very trace
Of Guelphic footsteps out this soil," he cried,
As quickly now to Padua he approach'd.
Intrenchments round the city deep were cast ; 450
Stockades were firmly fix'd, and flank'd along
By towers of wood. Azzo Ferrara sought,
And quick brought up the horse ; though many fled,

Yet many soon return'd. From Mantua pour
Her bravest troops ; from Venice flew her youth ;
They leave their liquid streets, their gondolas
Abandon, and their dames, as Ceres bright,
With ever melting eyes and breasts that heave
With warm delight, into the fiery storm
Of war to plunge, and on the blood-soak'd ground 460
'Mid putrid carcasses to lie. And now
Th' assault Romano orders ; steady, quick
His legions firmly to the stockade move ;
The air with missiles suddenly grows dark ;
As when the bearded corn, with hanging head,
Falls 'neath the summer storm, so his proud knights
Fell down, so reel'd his broken columns back.
The second day th' intrenchments to o'erleap
Again he strives ; to draw the leaguers out
Attempts, and on the plain the onslaught give : 470
But prudently the legate had ordain'd,
Under severest pain, that none should cross
The ditch, or issue out. Romano to
The gate of Santa Croce moves to pass
The rear, and in the vale the leaguers drive.
Again he brave resistance finds ; again
Is driven back ; and clamorous shouts ascend.
High courage swells each noble heart, and Fear

Can there no entrance find ; the warlike din
Dies on the distant gale. Padua had spar'd 480
Nor labour, treasure, nor her blood, to keep
That liberty she with so many risks
Had gain'd. T'inflame each heart and noble deeds
Produce, and make the virtues flourish, nought
More fit than rapid passage from the chain
Of tyranny to freedom bright and fair ;
It is another, and all glorious life,
A resurrection from the tomb ; that tomb
Of life, more hideous and appalling still
Than tomb of death. For such a glorious state, 490
Danger, fatigues are nought, nor every risk
Nor sacrifice ; that man should feel he is
Of himself master : the more ardent souls
Inflame the others, and the sacred glow
Grows brighter as it burns ; on all doth reign
Th' immortal passion for the public good !

As when the wolf circles the well-pent fold
About, and hears the snorting mastiff's growl,
He pauses ere he takes his leap, and then,
Growling with empty maw he trots away ; 500
So Eccelino now from Padua mov'd :
On Montcilici, his castle, march'd,
And found it faithful to his sway ; and firm

Its bold defender stood. The tow'ring mount,
Like Saint Helena in the sea, the plain
Around observ'd. On ev'ry side he tried
The fords. Close at his heels the leaguers march,
Ready to take him in the rear, whene'er
He should be now embroil'd. He turn'd his steps
Quick on Vincenza, and full of dire rage, 510
His own quarters burn'd; Brusegana then
And other hapless villages were sack'd
With fire and sword. All on Vincenza back
His army bent their harass'd march across
The plain. Surrounded by his chosen knights
The sullen warrior rode; far as the eye
Could see they move, and ever and anon
Return the sun's salute with radiant arms.
Far to the rear his choice horse skirmish with
The bold intruders that his army press, 520
And many a feat of chivalry is done,
And many a soldier bites the earth in death.

Onwards the columns roll; and now the sun
Shot his declining rays on the grey towers
Of a sequester'd convent, spar'd because
Unseen. Mounted from break of day the chief
Descried the spot, with thirst and hunger all
Beset. Chaf'd by their arms, his knights sought rest;

For on this trying day oft had they sweat,
Then dried and sweat again, exhausted all ; 530
Voracious, now they sought repast, such as
Would suit the hungry wolves, or kites, or crows.
Around the convent soon the sullen troop
Parade. As when a dovecote hungry hawks
Descry, with flutt'ring wing and wild alarm
The timid inmates fly, and hover round :
So now the nuns are scar'd ; the aged had
'Travers'd the country round, kind aid to give,
And in each village they were hid (as late
Occurr'd in Spain). This convent e'er was found 540
A refuge safe for maidens to resort
In saintly vesture, and in prayer to wait
For happier days, or there to end their lives.
Th' impatient knights storm'd at the doors which soon
Flew open ; then with stiffen'd gait their chief
They follow, and the squires and grooms their steeds
In cloisters turn, and on the chapel floor
Their ringing armour pile. O'er every stall
Where chanted saintly nun, a crested helm
Now hung. A whole month's food from blazing hearths
Sends forth its sav'ry smell. The weary knights 551
To banquet in the hall invite the nuns.
The Abbess staid with prudent courtesy,

The Eccelino places by her side ;
And ev'ry knight beside him seats a nun,
Whose timid, downcast look, strong contrast makes
With fiery eyes of soldiers, bronz'd with war,
Hirsute and rough. When hunger is appeas'd
The wine they quaff, and smile upon the nuns ;
Who now at length reliev'd from dread of death, 560
Venture to look, and smile on them again,
And in their prattle many questions ask ;
And some more bold play with the golden chains
That round the knights' necks hung, on which were strung
Badges of love, or war ; these they admire,
And eager will their hidden meaning know.
The holy Abbess saw the sudden change ;
Flush'd with indignant pride of her lost power,
The saintly dame, in loud and bitter terms,
Romano fierce reproach'd with sacrilege. 570
'Twixt fear and rage, as women sometimes will,
She long and loudly rail'd at him ; but when
The tyrant saw contemptuous smiles circling
On his knights' lips, convuls'd was all his frame ;
His dagger quick he drew, and sheath'd it in
The matron's heart ; her streaming blood was lost,
Mingling in streams of the red wine. Wild shrieks
Now rent the air ; the chief's fierce flame was caught

And flew from breast to breast ; the tables are
O'erthrown, and lawless brutal horrors reign'd. 580

Oh, Muse, draw now a veil o'er that black night !
Such nights belong not to Romano's days
Alone, as Spain can tell, when o'er the walls
Of Zaragoza storm'd the torrent pour'd
That whelm'd the peaceful fields, and soak'd them all
With village blood ; when holy nuns were thrown
To feed like fuel the devouring flames,
That o'er her land their devastation spread !

Gorg'd and oppress'd with wine and toil, the knights
Lay all around ; but Eccelino's soul 590
Sought little rest, he to excess unus'd ;
Ambition's fire unquench'd glow'd in his heart,
And from his eyes e'er gleam'd ; he rose before
The break of day, calmly pursued his march,
And, undisturb'd, before Vincenza's gates,
With all his host arrives. Meanwhile, the nuns,
Silent as death, with eyes fix'd on the earth,
To matins go ; nor can they raise their voice :
Stifled with sobs, and tears, with hands clasp'd o'er
Their heads, and mien disorder'd, to the hall 600
Trembling they move, and sighs and trickling tears
Their converse make ; and many on their knees
Quick fell, when they their holy mother's corse

Beheld, with gaping wound, and bath'd in gore
And wine ; and sacred vessels trampled on
The floor, and many a blessed crucifix
Broken, and scatter'd here and there, and all
The marks of that wild, dreadful night ; with coifs,
And scapular, and veils all rent, and stain'd
With wine in sacrilegious orgies hot ! 610
They bear their Abbess' corse away, washed
And deck'd with rosemary and rue ;
In midst of tapers, place it in the shrine.
The incense to the roof now wreaths, and faint
And trembling voices chant the solemn dirge ;
Ere the moon rose, their mother to the earth
Is borne in grief that only spoke in tears.

Around Vincenza's walls the army camps ;
Soon the steer bleeds and smokes upon the flame,
And loosen'd from their warlike gear some stretch 620
Upon the ground, and some the white tents pitch.
Romano in the city rides, and to
Th' assembled citizens thus speaks : " Hear me,
My faithful friends ; the dastard army that
Despoils the country far and wide when none
Oppose, like timid women hide and skulk
Intrench'd ; in vain we brave them to the field !
Five days in Padua's walls I bearded them,

Nor would they venture forth to come ; but ye,
Vincenza's val'rous citizens, come forth, 630
And meet the dastard foe ; unlike to them
Ye'll fight, and prove how bright your valour shines."
By such fair words thus gain'd, from out the town
Quick pour'd th' incautious citizens. And from
The camp a body march of Piedmontese
And chosen Germans, who the citadel
Seize, and Romano now securely leaves
Vincenza. To Verona straight he moves,
Whose crowded prisons with more victims teem
Of Padua. Soon his spies and jailors haste 640
Informing him their prisoners had said
" His cause was ruin'd !" and how great the joy
They felt to see him thus return. No more
Was wanting to decide his wav'ring soul
To cruelty that ne'er can be forgot.
His orders then he gives, that all of them
Exterminated be by flame and sword,
Or starv'd to death ! Oh, day of woe on earth !
Oh, day of tears to trickle from the skies !
Oh, day of joy in Hell ! The demons e'en 650
All stood aghast, and furies check'd their rage.
Let the Muse say, that has the passions sung
That tear the heart, how can we comprehend

A master who can such dread orders give,
Can find e'en slaves willing to execute !
In all times tyranny can e'er find arms ;
Howe'er atrocious, still men ready are
To aid its acts the most detestable ;
As thou canst tell, oh Erin, 'neath the guise
Of loyalty and faith ! All must confess 660
The most inhuman princes ever were
Best serv'd and most obey'd, and therefore should
No quarter their vile dastard slaves obtain.
And ye, thrice glorious brave who sink in death
For liberty ; how bright your glory beams !
Ye are the stars that spangle the dark night
Of tyranny accurst ; ye cheer our hearts,
And we revive when your vast sacrifice
We contemplate ; for others' sake pale death
Ye seek, and scorn to live in chains on earth ! 670
Th' exterminating fiend, with gloating eyes,
Solac'd his sight on fields of blood, on which
The grass ne'er more will grow, nor flow'ry herbs ;
Indignant nature her congenial warmth
Denies ; the showers of Heav'n can never wash
The stains away ; all life, in memory
Of slaughter'd life, has vanish'd from the spot.
Yet, terrible to say, even jocose

The ruthless fiend unto his Chancellor
Exclaim'd : " These souls unto the démon I 680
Make sacrifice for all his favours kind,
And benefits, which from his high behests
I reap ; and thou shalt seek him, and present
The list, that in thy doom-book thou hast writ."
Of thousands scarce two hundred now escap'd ;
They wander'd forth with mutilated limbs,
And blind ; their lamentations reach'd the skies !
Many were burnt alive in crowds, nor had
The European hemisphere yet seen
Hell's flame upon its surface blaze so fann'd 690
By its most dire exterminating fiend !

Soon, Italy, the fountain of thy tears
Was dried by the loud trumpet's blast, and Est'
Sweeps o'er the land, spreading the flame of war.
The men of Cologne rise and join the League,
Legnagos broke their chains, hurling them down
With acclamations, and all Azzo hail
Their liege lord, and the tyrant's vengeance brav'd.
He ever on th' alert no time allow'd
Their bold resistance now to consummate ; 700
But on them turn'd, and many a leaguer round
Surpris'd. Four hundred Germans him attend ;
He rode a horse of matchless weight and force,

Whose eye-balls sparkled as the foam he toss'd
That hid the golden bit ; in his curvets
He crouch'd like arrow in the bended bow,
To dart and overthrow his foes : his bright
Dun coat vied with his golden trappings rich.
On Eccelino's burnish'd helm his plume
Of red and black nodded on high, and drew 710
All eyes towards him ; the leaguers were inclos'd
On every side ; yet, as a herd of stags,
Which hunters seek in lofty toils, with shout
And hounds and horn to drive, turn suddenly,
And fixing low their heads, burst through the wall
Of men, and swift rush to the covert deep ;
So through surrounding ranks the leaguers burst.
In front had Eccelino fought to keep
Them in, and dam th' unruly torrent up ;
Knights, men at arms, fell from his stroke, and broke
Away ; no one save Est' dare him confront ; 721
But he and Azzo never met ; and as
He flew to where the combat threaten'd most,
A winged shaft pierc'd through his courser's breast ;
And plunging forward with tremendous force,
His horse now roll'd, and rais'd a cloud of dust
That Eccelino cover'd o'er, and in
The conflict he was lost. His knights surround

Him soon, and mount him on another horse.
First to the onset, last in the retreat, 730
Romano brings away his troops, and turns
Oft-times to deal his blows on those who tread
Too close upon his heels, matchless in war !

Meanwhile the Ghibbelin chiefs urge peace, and strive
To reconcile the brothers Alberic
And Eccelino. Long with deadly hate
Had they been sever'd ; and yet some have thought
'Twas policy that kept them separate,
That Eccelino might, through Alberic,
The leaguers' secrets know. The insults that 740
He from the legate late at Padua had
Receiv'd, who scorn'd his proffer'd service then,
With his ferocious brother him induc'd
To treat ; which brought the ruin more complete
Upon his house and race. The truce was made
At Castel Franco ; there the brothers met
With warm embrace ; then Alberic brought forth
His sons, three graceful youths, and thus did speak :
“ Accept, Romano, these dear pledges mine
Of brother's love ; accept of my good faith 750
My sons as hostages to thee, now long
Estrang'd from me. What passion can the breast
More strongly move than warm parental love !

Passion with selfish feeling all unmix'd !
What pain more dire, what torture more acute,
Than loss of children ? Oh, Romano ! guard
This pledge with holy care, in proof of thy
Devoted brother's fealty unto thee,
Chief of our house, that tott'ring stands assail'd
By all the League, and to destruction doom'd." 760
Then Eccelino Alberic embrac'd,
And took the youths, and under good safeguard
Them to the Castle of Saint Zenone sent,
As wise in peace, as he was fierce in war.

Now yields the far fam'd rock on mountain high
Of Montcilici ; this strong fortress opes
Its gates to Est' ; Geraldo was the chief
Who yielded it. To Eccelino he
Returning basely pledges knightly word,
Ere many days are past that Est' shall die. 770
To gain his master's favour he is sworn
To plunge his dagger deep in Azzo's heart.
With many a cunning turn the camp he gains ;
With loud laments of Eccelino's rule
He interests every ear, and at the dead
Of night silent he steals along and creeps
To Azzo's tent, by sentinels unseen.
But the black dwarf with watchful ear his step

Perceives : quick on him Sudak springs, and ere
Azzo from sleep is rous'd th' assassin's sight 780
Is quench'd, and from his face his nose cut off;
(Thus Eccelino was e'er wont to do !)
And his companions twain lose each an eye,
And back to Eccelino they are sent.

Dreadful reprisal ! Lawless was the age,
Fierce were men's passions, when such deeds were done !
When chiefs might pass from sleep to bloody death !
Oh, Muse ! the close of this dread tragedy
Draws nigh ; stop not to mark each bloody deed
That stamp'd with double horror these wild times 790
When man, robust in virtue and in crime,
In bloody characters mark'd the strong line
'Twixt deepest tyranny and freedom bright !

BOOK XII.

Fast by a rippling, rushing stream, whose sounds
Melodious murmur soft and sweet, and lull
In harmony all nature now at rest,
When mantling night our limbs invites to sleep,
(Sweet sleep ! it breathes its balmy breath on life,
With gentle moisture then bedews the limbs
Of war and toil) Azzo had pitch'd his tent ;
On aromatic carpet of shorn turf
From which no vapours dank exhal'd ; and ere
He sunk to rest, his conscious lamp had fix'd 10
His eyes on Maro's lofty lay sublime ;
On that harmonious verse that the stung soul
To peace can bring, with pleasing visions fill,
And sooth the raptur'd heart slumb'ring in dreams,
The echos of surrounding worlds ; for dreams
Must echos be from worlds we feel unseen.
In this Elysium he had wander'd long ;
Long had he sigh'd o'er lost Hermione,

Restor'd to saintly rest, no tumult hot
Then rushing through her swelling veins. In dreams 20
He thought he bright Elysium saw brighter
Than morning light, milder than western eve,
Where purple clouds breath amber, and perfumes
Of Araby float on each fanning gale.
They fann'd the budding trees, now opening wide
Their blossoms, brilliant in their various tints,
And soft these blossoms as the falling snow,
And like the snow, when zephyrs spread their wings,
They fell on broider'd turf, spangled with gems
Innumerable, and the form of flowers 30
Assume ; translucent lakes made mirrors here
And there, join'd by cascades, that music pour'd
Too sweet for human ears ; and myrtle green
And th' arbutus flower'd here, midst trees unknown
To mortal eyes. On marble rocks there rose
Temples of jasper, where fair maids whose forms
Were veil'd in purest white, more beauteous far
Than those of Lesbos or Arcadia fam'd,
Kept watch round fires whose flame celestial seem'd
As borrow'd from the gentle evening star. 40
Before his steps burst on his wond'ring sight
A colonnade of alabaster form'd,
Sustaining domes cover'd with fretted gold :

And on his raptur'd ear burst then the sounds
Of minstrelsy divine, as he advanc'd.
He felt the odorous gales were freighted full
With chorusses, until his senses soft
Were borne upon the air. Approaching near,
Within the glorious temples he beheld
Spirits of each sex and every age combin'd, 50
Blended in groups; with harmony unseen,
Unfelt on earth, enrob'd in brilliant hues,
Through which the form in perfect beauty shone.
They struck the golden harp that thrill'd his heart,
With glorious song and note rous'd and told
The high affections of the soul; in strains
Of pity then it sank, mournful and deep,
And pass'd to calmer joy: more fervent now
Swell the sweet notes, and oft to raptures rise,
And in full chorus quite absorb the soul. 60
Through many a vale he wandered long, and trod
Softly on the sweet humble violet.
His feet would shake the odorous morning dew
From fairest lilies; forms ideal pure
Across his rapt sight flit, and Nature here
Shone bright beyond what poet's fancy feigns.
Yet e'en this fairy scene its sadness brought
To him; for she, the fairest flower of all,

She was not here, Hermione was lost !
What joy without Hermione could swell 70
His heart ? with her what woe could e'er it sink ?
And as he strove to raise his voice to call
On her lov'd name, he woke, and nought he heard
Save the loud murmurs of the camp, that rose
To rouse him from his slumb'rous sympathies.

The joyous bustle fills the morning air ;
The hammer now tells preparation quick
To form the circus for the games : the camp
O'erflow'd with Italy's bright chivalry.
Soon a vast amphitheatre is form'd, 80
And at each end the goals of shining spears
Are rais'd, together bound, with shields hung round ;
And thither when the noon-tide sun declin'd
Thousands had flock'd. The race commences soon ;
Light barbs are led, their backs with brazen balls
Bristled with spikes are hung, each number then
Is marked in chalk ; twelve barbs fleet as the wind
Approach the goal, opening their nostrils quick,
Their swelling veins full mark'd upon their skin ;
Like deer, they scarcely bend the flashing turf, 90
That at each footstep changes quick its hue.
Restless they paw and rear and snort behind
The cord that's drawn before their breast. The rope

Now falls; the groom slips the light bridle bit
From out their mouth, and off they start, and scour
Along amidst the eager murmurings
Of the vast throng, like flights of starlings that
Circle and wheel in air. By the shrill shouts
Urg'd on, the fleetest fly in front; stooping
Low down their heads o'er the green turf they skim. 100
The victor forth is led, with reeking sides,
And open nostrils breathing hard; and soon
The ground is clear'd, for wrestlers to come on.
Twelve pair of wrestlers enter now the lists;
They strip, their brawny limbs display, limbs with
Firm swelling muscles knit and tendons strong:
Weighty they are, though in each movement light:
They all Herculean seem. In pairs they now
Begin; first close two sons of fam'd Sienna;
With heads bent forwards, arms stretch'd out, they seize
Each other, then the dorsal muscles swell
With vast exertion; and like horse's necks
Their thighs appear, and arms like knotty thorns.
Like snakes they writhe, and o'er his shoulders one
The other throws, and when he fell he shook
The ground, and heav'd his breath so loud, it was
Heard all around the ring; but up he rose,
And his vast breast was like a batt'ring ram,

To knock the portal of a city down.
On rushed he, and with force amain quick bore 120
The other to the earth. One hour of light
Remain'd, in which the skill and strength of all
Appear'd; the manliest forms were here display'd
In art and force, such as in early Greece
Bold sculpture form'd, unequall'd since by aught
Of modern art, wanting the fire of Greece!
Night now o'er all their labours clos'd; they sank
To dewy sleep, and all the camp was hush'd.
In sweet repose, save when the goblet full
Of ruby wine sparkled 'midst laughter loud, 130
And song and boast vaunting the next day's feats.

Scarcely had Phœbus shewn his face, the lark
Shrill carolling in the clear morning sky,
Refresh'd by night, still flung o'er half the earth,
When quick the field was throng'd; and soon appear'd
The chariots; each by two proud steeds were drawn,
With plumes on heads, and glitt'ring trappings rich;
Their manes with gaudy ribbons plaited fall.
The gilded cars now slowly move around,
And form in line; each charioteer quick mounts, 140
In various colours gaily clad their scarfs
Wave in the wind; they start in rapid whirl
Like to the distant surge, and as they pass

The goals, they rush like bursting winds when blow
The southern tempest : and the charioteers,
With bodies bent and outstretch'd arms, lash on
The foaming steeds. Four times they turn the goals
'Mid the spectators' shouts and clamours loud
That rise from doubtful expectation high.
The flag now drops, the victor is declar'd, 150
Uprais'd upon the car, with standard high
Unfurl'd ; around the panting steeds are led
In march triumphant amid loud applause.
The victors straight to Azzo's lodge are brought :
To him whose barb outstripp'd the rest a piece
Of scarlet cloth of finest texture's given ;
To every wrestler a full purse of gold,
And bracelets for their wives and mistresses,
That women might to manly feats thus urge
The men. The victor in the chariot race 160
With wreaths of oak was crown'd and acorns gilt,
And a rich silver drinking cup receiv'd,
On which was wrought with skill all rustic games
And woodland sports : no man could quaff it off,
Or, when 'twas fill'd, lift to his thirsty lips ;
Yet many that day tried, and reeling fell.
The orgies were prolong'd till day, for when
The race was o'er the tables all were set,

And the whole camp partook the welcome feast.
The sav'ry meats smoke on the ample boards, 170
And many thousand flasks are pour'd to love
And war, and mettle-stirring songs resound
In joyous chorus, full and boisterous mirth.

Meanwhile on Eccelino fortune smil'd,
And golden fruit cluster'd on all his hopes,
And wide o'er Lombardy soon spread his rule.
None could have thought so nigh he was unto
The precipice o'er which he fell. Oh ! thou
Bright goddess, Fortune ! thou that makest us
So often drunk with hope to wake us then 180
To dark despair ; fix'd are thine altars deep
Within our quailing hearts ! We pray, we pant,
We sigh, and oft-times cast our eyes around
In anxious guise thy joyous face to see ;
Thy form enchanting, in thy dazzling robes
Of every brilliant hue, and spangled o'er
With sparkling gems. To thee we pour
Our lives ; thou lead'st us through the mazy dance
Of life ; sometimes to mount a throne, and then
To be down hurl'd ; Freedom sometimes to grasp, 190
With her through cities populous to go,
And laughing vales, and plains that wave with corn,
And flower-enamell'd meads ; soon we are thrown

In dungeons dank and deep, to sigh in chains
Our lives away. Sometimes thou ledest us
To the fair feet of some inspiring nymph,
Or jocund dame, with mild and melting eye
Of azure blue, solace of all our ills:
Yet, fickle in thy favours, we must oft
Wait thine own time, and pine in languishment. 200

Now Eccelino's fortunes seem'd to rise.
In Brescia soon he blew the furious flame
'Twixt Guelph and Ghibbelin; there his faction fierce,
Bloated with pride, led by the Podesta
Griffo, arose at night their foes to seek.
Then blazing torches stream'd along the streets,
And savage yells sleep chas'd afar, and deep
Th' alarm bells peal, drums roll, and trumpets bray.
Half-arm'd rush'd out the valiant Guelphs; all night
They fought. As when the Holy Host through streets
Is brought to some sick couch, from casement high 211
Gleam household lamps; so gleam'd in women's hands
A lamp; then piercing screams above provoke
The fight below. Such din they raise as when
Rookeries are disturb'd; the roofs are throng'd;
They drown the clamour from below; Death now
Riots in midnight revelry, and shouts
Rend the night air, the Guelphs victorious drive

Their deadly foes ; Griffo is ta'en, with more
Who yield ; and to Cremona some, and some 220
Fly to Verona. At the first rumour
Of this dire feud, the gay and gallant youth,
Count Leoneso, panting for hot war,
From Mantua's walls with his militia flew
To join his friends, and shine in maiden arms.
This sparkling star now beam'd in flower of youth ;
With manly beauty was his noble blood
Adorn'd, and winning grace and courage keen,
That warm'd each vet'ran warrior's frozen breast,
And made each gentle virgin sigh ; the flames 230
Kindling of war and love where'er his steps
Him led. Graceful in mazy dance he shone ;
Soft he could tune his voice to love's sweet lay,
And languish at the feet of melting dames.
Then brilliant, harness'd for the field, his crest
Streaming adown the wind, ne'er could with him
The manag'd steed or swerve or turn aside,
As on he skimm'd, or sail'd to right or left,
Or rose in firm curvets, or, bounding high
In graceful capriols, he wav'd his lance, 240
Or falchion brandish'd o'er his head. His voice
The weary hound could cheer, or echo rouse
In dell of forest with blithe bugle horn.

The falcon from his wrist would fly to strike
The partridge down. But now, sweet love, and sports
Sylvan and rural, far he left behind,
For harder fare and sterner blows ; to sport
No more in bower of lady fair, but lie
Upon the gory field. Bright honour loud
With trumpet voice had call'd on him to lead 250
Her van ; his noble nature spurn'd and loath'd
All meaner things ; he sought a laurel crown.
How well becomes a noble youth the field
Of war ! Venus and Mars his parents e'er
Should be, their offspring must become on earth
Bright chivalry, in memory renown !
Offspring of Mars and Venus seem'd the youth.
His 'twas to rein the foaming steed ; single
To rush in front of the array of fight,
And mark the path of glory ; then receive 260
His meed from ladies' gracious smiles unask'd.

Now moves the Legate on, and soon a bold
Triumvirate was form'd ; Dovera then,
Palavincini and Romano, quick,
Join all their forces. On Gambara back
The Legate would retreat, and there await
Azzo with all his force from Mincio's shore.
All shrunk from Eccelino's dreaded name.

No host so great as Eccelino ! “ Shame ! ”
The youthful warrior, Leoneso, cried ; 270
“ ’Tis I that call ye back, ye recreants vile ;
As once before at Padua now become !
Warriors and knights, come, follow me ! My youth
May the blind goddess now propitiate !
My virgin arms shall with hot blood be stain’d ;
My steed, like the fam’d Pegasus, will through
Their squadrons plunge, and mark his bloody path,
Through which our chivalry shall flow. My friends,
Now onward rush ; assail their ranks ; o’erthrow
Their van, or headlong fall, transfix’d upon 280
Their pikes, and press them ’neath you in the dust.”
He spoke, and youthful fire flash’d in his eye ;
The soldiers shouted loud ; a tumult through
The camp arose, like the sea’s distant roar,
When the southwest wind curls the swelling wave.
“ Hail, valiant boy ! ” the veteran knights all cried.
Not so the wary Legate ; he his head
Shook in distrust ; he fear’d again to cope
With Eccelino till brave Est’ arriv’d,
Whose troops now lay three marches in the rear. 290
Then fierce Romano’s bosom glow’d, and all
His knights delighted were : the troops were mov’d
To ecstasy ; a brilliant vict’ry all

Foresee. Their lines were form'd ; anxious they wait
Th' unruly foes, who madly rush on foul
Defeat, and add another link unto
The chains that Italy had long fast bound.
The Olio quick is pass'd, the onslaught made ;
With Azzo's fire the youth now on the foe
Doth rush ; four knights in front doth soon unhorse.
He drives his furious steed on ranks of pikes, 301
And toppling o'er his head falls with a crash
That bends the pikeman to the earth ; twelve knights
Rush in, and bear him bleeding from the field.
Pale is that glowing cheek, and dim that eye,
That tenderness drew forth from lovely dames ;
And clotted were those ringlets with dark gore,
Which round their playful fingers oft had curl'd ;
And deadly white that front his mother oft
Had kiss'd. Distorted all his features were 310
With pain ; yet the brave blood that warm'd his veins,
Could not arrested be by the cold hand
Of death ; its vig'rous, youthful warmth repell'd
Th' attack. The combat spreads, and all the sky
By arrowy showers is darken'd ; and the tide
Of battle ebbs and flows, and to and fro
Is driven, whilst many a brilliant knight
Bursts singly forth to glory and to death.

Oft is the flying steed arrested quick
By the wing'd shaft; with hideous crash the horse 320
And horseman fall. Now glorious in the strife
Romano points his truncheon; speed away
His ready knights to loose his thunderbolts.
Stately and slow in his main battle he
Rides on his proud black steed. With nodding crest,
And armour rich inlaid with gold, he looks
The god of war; so free his port, and calm
His mien, all now forgot his crimes: no knight
So glorious shines in arms. And now advance
The German horse; earth quakes as on they rush, 330
And all o'erwhelm. The leaguers fly in crowds,
The Legate taken, and the field is won.
Drives on the furious horse amain; with shouts
Shrill and confus'd a chorus wild they make,
Mix'd with the din of horses' sounding feet.
Torrents of men flow o'er th' Olio's banks;
The horsemen plunge into the thicken'd tide;
Striving to climb the adverse steep, backwards
They're thrown, and sink amidst the wrecks
Of crowding foes. The river's ting'd with gore, 340
Nor can it slake the thirst of agony;
The stubble is in blaze, and bushes dry
Crack in the spreading flames. Many are burnt

Alive: both friend and foe together die
In the fierce flames. Oh! what a piteous sight!
Men, horses, half consum'd, and the earth black,
All to a cinder burnt; a river choak'd
With dead and sinking men, steeds, and rich arms;
For youthful warriors hot rode on the spur
And foremost fell. Romano o'er the field 350
Now cast his eyes, and smil'd; his bosom glow'd,
And soon he saw the Legate captive led
In triumph to his tent, and greets him oft
With salutation meet; invites him then
To his repast with courtesy profound.
The leaguers' camp is storm'd, and plunder'd quick,
Their ostentatious wealth rolls on the earth:
Vases of gold and silver, drinking cups,
Chalices rich for the high mass, and vests
Broider'd with gold, arms of all sorts, and gems; 360
All, all taken, or scatter'd lie. Great store
Of wines, and savoury meats smoking on fires,
Are seiz'd; and many a damsel and a dame,
Clasping their hands, are found; and rushing through
The camp, from soldiers flying, on their knees
They sink before each knight they meet. The knights,
Dismounting, mark out their prize; each with kiss
And hot embrace then claim them as their own.

Meanwhile the Legate with amaze beheld
The warlike grandeur of Romano's tent. 370
No eastern prince, not Tamerlane, nor e'en
Fam'd Bajazet, more sumptuous were; here Moors
Were rang'd, and Saracens, that form'd a guard;
The crescent, in their turbans, shone to brave
The Cross. Romano's brilliant arms are soon
Stripp'd off by squires of lineage high; and slaves
Upon their knee, in silver vessels, hand
Water to wash, to him and to his guests.
Arabian gums and perfumes smoke around;
The golden vessels glitter on the board; 380
The banquet is prolong'd; the battle's dust
Is wash'd away in copious draughts of wine.
A feast more splendid ne'er grac'd royal board.
Yet, on a fast, Romano did observe
An abstinence severe, the Legate not
To shock. His courtesy most gracious shone;
Before the tent then a quadrille was form'd
Of Moors and Saracens on slender steeds,
With open nostrils pink, and nerve mark'd limbs,
That trod as lightly as the forest stag. 390
Their full eyes like the mountain chamois shone;
And their arch'd necks writh'd supple; with their manes
And tails extended strait they cut the air,

Like greyhounds playing on a close shorn lawn.
Their riders many evolutions make ;
Their javelins throw, and catch them as they bound.
All eyes are witch'd with wondrous horsemanship.

Swift flew the tidings of the Olio's fight.

The sun now had his bright race well nigh run,
When Azzo's columns darkly wind in march 400
Adown the steep ; their chief was parch'd by drought,
And at a gushing rill he drank ; his helm
Hung at his saddle bow. The lengthen'd march
Had dimm'd the radiant arms of all his host :
Their steeds were powder'd o'er with sweat, that dried
In the sun's scorching rays ; and all their limbs,
Whether of man or beast, dragg'd wearily
Along ; and as they passed the brook, the men
Rush from their ranks, and flat fall down to kiss
The cooling stream ; and many spurs in sides 410
Of steeds are dug, to drive them o'er the brook.
A murmur through the ranks quick flew that all
With wild amazement struck, that Olio's tide
Ran red with Guelphic blood ; another soon
Was heard, " The Legate's taken, and our cause
Is lost !" A shepherd's boy had told the tale ;
He by a travelling friar had heard it said.
Now many rumours rouse the weary troops,

And all shout loud, "March on! march on!" Yet Est'
With prudent care then marks the camp, nor will 420
He then the rumour heed; but when the night
Hath clad the earth in black he sends his scouts
Far to the front; then on an apple feasts,
And 'neath a tree stretches himself and sleeps.

Scarcely the lark had flutter'd in the sky,
High pois'd and warbled her sleep-chasing note,
That welcomes Phœbus in his golden car,
Rich floods of light emitting, calling forth
Creation into life, when purest prayers
Are poured forth from every living thing, 430
The great Creator to adore. Azzo
Refresh'd by deepest sleep, by rumours late
Now unalarm'd; when soon he heard with grief
That all these rumours were most true; and soon
A flood of leaguers on his camp bore down;
Many with wounds were cicatris'd, and stiff
Their hair with gore was in the sun bak'd black.
He all his courage summons, and, with port
Of high command, rebukes their dastard flight.
To the rear they march; as when mountain flood, 440
In autumn, rushing down with darken'd spray,
And wrecks of trees, and of the peasant's toil,
O'erwhelms and taints a clearer flood: so now

With Azzo they a secret treaty form'd.
Heal'd of his wounds them Leoneso joins.
Many, whose names too numerous are to sing,
All men of great renown, of gentle blood
And high degree, whose prowess had shone forth,
Now sign'd the League renew'd, and at the foot
Of Rhætian Alps this glorious host were met. 500

Heroic Muse, thine aid I now invoke !
Swell my weak voice loud as thy trumpet hoarse,
Braying to call its glorious votaries back
Unto the field of Death, or Liberty !
When shall thy honied lips, Italia, call
Through brazen trumpet's blast thy myriads forth
To the dread field ? When shall thy native chiefs
Arise, to double heat their boiling blood
Rous'd by thy sun-beams, and, with nervous arms
And giant strength, pluck dire oppression down, 510
Bloated with wrath, and throw the monster o'er
The Alps, disgorging then his rav'nous maw ?
Long has he suck'd thy substance and thy blood.
Assist me, Muse, to sing that glorious scene
When at heroic Est's command now flock'd
To foot of Rhætian Alps the squadrons dense
Of noble knights, on prancing coursers borne,
High mettled all, and arm'd with double life ;

Ready that life to pour for Liberty.

The flower of glorious chivalry, they pour'd 520

From every part mail-clad ; in harness bright

Glitter'd their fiery steeds, to rush and bear

Them on ; what pennons stream'd with high device

Enwrought ; manhood and age and youth, all mov'd ;

Ten thousand arms were rais'd, but one heart glow'd ;

One cry was heard, " Mount, mount for Italy !"

What fervour glow'd when burghers threw their caps

In air with loud acclaim, and peasants ran

In crowds to join, and rend the air with cries

Of holy warfare on the foe ; and maids 530

And gentle dames, clasping their hands, implor'd

The Virgin's aid ; and priests their solemn voice

Attun'd to prayer, more fervent, deep, contrite,

For God, his mercy to pour down, and heal

The wounds of this long, bloody, dreadful strife.

Man lives a double life in such a time ;

Man revels in most glorious life, when he,

Arising from the dust, seeks life to tear

Oppression down ; trampling the monster 'neath

His feet, he lifts his eyes to Heav'n, and pours 540

His grateful soul, rejoices then in life

Renew'd, restor'd, dawning like op'ning morn,

That the dark chilly night hath chas'd away.

When the dun-colour'd sultry autumn sky
With hot sciroc o'ershaded hangs, athwart
It shoots the fiery star, brilliant beyond
The starry host of Heav'n : so from the host
Of dazzling, mail-clad knights, rush'd Azzo forth.
His proud steed plunging up the steep with force,
Too daring to behold with ease ; he look'd 550
Ambition, scaling heights Olympic, there
To seize the seat of mighty Jove. Him all
Now strove to follow, yet half way were fix'd.
Est' wheel'd his steed around, with arms outstretch'd,
In bold heroic strains them thus address'd.
" Behold the plains of Lombardy, fruitful,
Rich, joyous, Nature's fav'rite, studded thick
With cities, as the firmament with stars.
Milan the grand is on our right ; the rich
Bologna is in front, and on our left 560
Venice magnificent doth lie ; there too
Is Genoa the superb ; Florence the fair ;
And thou, eternal city crown'd, Rome
The holy, empress of the world, and nurse
Of gods ; the sacred word from thy rich paps
Thy daughters, Faith, Hope, Charity, have suck'd !
Shall these insulted be by foreign bands,
Who spread a cobweb o'er our native soil,

Which our fears make an adamantine chain ?
What can withstand the storm of Liberty, 570
That with a whirlwind blows, bringing again
Wild chaos all around ? Let all around
To chaos turn, so that Italia pulls
Her tyrant down ! Oh, gentle nobles, what
Is slavery ? Oh, valiant knights, what is
A foreign yoke ? Of man's prerogative
Ye're shorn ; and blood, and chains your daily bread
Are now ; but rather let us rush amid
The flood of death, 'whelm'd in the Stygian pool !"
He spoke, ten thousand swords and lances high 580
Brandish'd, then glitter'd in the sun ; and loud
Acclaims the vaulted skies now rend : the roar
Far floating on the distant camp, arous'd
The soldiers, sitting o'er their smoking mess,
Again to summon them to glory, or
To death ; the earth felt conscious of the shout.

Meanwhile Romano in Bassano heard
These tidings ; he his dagger drew aloft ;
His mother's shade invok'd ; but now, alas !
All powerless, vain, his incantations fell. 590
No more to sate his soul with power insane
He thought, or drink the cup of vengeance deep.
A sorceress from burning Ethiop's plains

Was here, unravelling the high decrees
Of Fate and Fortune. He the Sibyl dark
Distracted call'd ; her fame was wondrous great,
Omens and dreams she could unravel well,
And magic lore from Egypt she had brought.
Well could she tell when Fortune's fickle power
Would either rise or fall, for all men borne 600
Upon the gale of active life must have
Their rise or fall ; but Fortune's mazy paths
Are to most men inextricable. Yet,
A quicker sense have women : oft-times they
Foresee what's clos'd, e'en to the eyes refin'd
Of wisdom ; e'en experience cannot teach
Fortune that springs from dark affinities,
Which we can never know ; nor can we view
Death hov'ring round us with uplifted dart,
Who sees his many victims, puzzled which 610
To strike ; he first hits one, and then the next
Escapes awhile, for all are doom'd his dart
To feel, and some he'll miss upon the field,
And in the chamber strike the next. Oh, Death !
To us thou dost appear as fickle as
Thy mistresses the Fates ; by stealth thou com'st
Upon us all, and in a moment stiff
We lie ; and leave a vacant spot, which soon

Is fill'd by life, that from our passions hot
Doth spring, oozing from Nature's bosom warm. 620
The sable Sibyl was of middle age,
Of stature full, of port commanding ; she
Look'd as if human passions all in turns
Possess'd her breast ; and when she roll'd her eyes
Askance, they flash'd with cruel lust, and seem'd
As if in blood she revell'd with delight.
'Twas said, her mother on dark Niger's banks
Was born, a cannibal had been ; and when
The imp was wean'd she gave her infant blood
To suck. She Eccelino's horrid march 630
In thought had follow'd, and she gloated on
His hateful crimes ; now, on his fortunes all
Her lore she pour'd, yet inwardly she smil'd
To see the crisis of his fate approach.
For she lov'd fell destruction with herself
In close affinity to be : her instinct was
Destruction ! She wore a turban all o'er
With colours cross'd ; her robe was yellow silk ;
Around her arms and neck hung coral chains,
And gems, and pearls, pluck'd from the deep sea, where
Wreck'd ships are found ; on every finger too 641
A ring she wore, with cabalistic scroll
Inscrib'd, with which she seal'd the doom of all,

Who claim'd her lore, on bark of trees, such as
Far Indians shave in vast Canadian wilds.
Such was the Sibyl whom Romano call'd
To solve th' eventful problem of his fate.
Th' electric fluid pass'd, and quick repass'd
Her veins ; and her keen instinct, thus combin'd
With worlds and scenes unseen, unfelt ; she knew
Mortals to throw into deep trance, and then 651
Elicit truth through words mechanical.
For magic fell doth every form assume
And is of every clime and age : the sleep
Magnetic is but the deep trance of yore ;
All nature is enchain'd, all parts to join.
Before her proud Romano stood abash'd ;
He downwards hung his fierce head to receive
Her terror bearing words ; th' infernal spirit
Thrill'd through her frame, and swell'd her bosom high.
Th' enchantress now arose ; her eyes betray'd 661
Her agony, rolling in phrenzy wild ;
Flashing terrific glance around, her hands
Uprais'd, her spells she mutter'd ; and the powers
Inhal'd, that swell'd her teeming bosom fell,
And to her daring soul unfolded now
Dread secrets of the time to come ; awhile
She paus'd, pond'ring in silence deep, and then

Resum'd with awful dignity her seat,
While thus her mighty victim she address'd. 670
“ Hark, to my mystic words ! the king of beasts,
On native Afric sands, is lord of all ;
'Mid desolation vast, he slakes his thirst
At oozing springs, and sates his ravening maw
With blood of beasts, that come to drink, but oft
Is rous'd, by shout of the bold hunter, that
On light barb horse, a bunch of javelins bears,
Pointed and bright ; the noble beast comes forth,
Marching with head erect and flowing mane ;
His sides he lashes with his tail, and now 680
Around, like swallows on a summer's eve,
The hunters skim and twine : at one he springs,
Another throws his javelin in his sides ;
He roars amain, the fight's begun, his eye
Flashes with fire, on every side his sight
Meets death and darts, he panting, raving, falls,
Buried beneath the bloody sand, transfix'd
To earth ; thus falls on Zara's desert oft
The king of brutes ; thus shall Romano fall !
Beware, Cassano, shun that fatal spot ; 690
I see the Adda's foaming flood run red
With blood, and many a knight and noble youth
In vain will stem its rapid course, above

Destruction fell will fly in air, and gloat
With lurid eyes upon her murd'rous work.
Thick showers of arrows shall from shields rebound,
And darken the wild sky, when in the wave
Thou shalt thy fiery courser plunge !” No more
She said, but mutter'd cabalistic words ;
Aloft her arms she rais'd, and then sank mute. 700

With inward horror was Romano thrill'd ;
He started back ; again his dagger high
He held ; then stern stalk'd forth in sullen mood ;
The awful danger swell'd his mighty heart.
Abandon'd now by all th' infernal powers,
Deeply within his mighty mind he scann'd
His state forlorn ; great plans came crowding fast
Upon him ; and at length he sees one, ne'er
Conceiv'd since Charlemagne, to crush at once
The adverse host, by rapid march upon 710
The walls of Milan ; there enthrone his power,
And place upon his head the iron crown.
Renouncing thus the aid of Hell, that seem'd
Now unpropitious ; he on his great host
Alone relying, ponder'd thus : “ Methinks
Thus may I triumph both o'er fiend and foe ;
Myself shall be of my great fortunes now
The sole artificer ; and my good sword,

That ne'er hath fail'd in need, be my sole God !"
Then order'd he the silent march. Compact 720
And quick the legions move ; few loiterers there
Are seen to drag their weary limbs along ;
Most with a step elastic bound ; they pass
Without a halt o'er many a weary mile.
With ribaldry assail the gaping throng,
Who seem struck dumb with awe, as they behold
Their fierce and martial mien ; careless the knights
Now ride along, and gaily pluck the boughs
Of oaks, that cross their path, and in their caps
They stick them, and upon their horses' heads 730
T'attract the flies ; their helms all nodding at
Their saddle-bows. Romano stretch'd at ease,
In littler borne, not to fatigue his mind,
And ponder at his leisure on his plans.
The noontide sun now scorching darts his rays.
" Halt, halt !" runs down the column ; o'er the fields
They break ; their arms are pil'd, their shoulders eas'd.
Some run for water ; others cut the wood ;
The messes smoke ; each open grove with knights
Is fill'd, and horses stand in groups, with girths 740
Unloos'd ; and soon the ruddy wine is quaff'd
From rustic bowls, 'mid laugh and merriment.
Then all sink down to rest, the guards except,

Who, watchful, gaze around. Again they march
Before the sun had ris'n, and drew not bit
Until they halted beneath Milan's walls.
No friend he found in this divided town ;
The tyrant all with horror view'd. The walls
All glitter'd with brave chivalry ; the bells
All rang a peal, and every burgher clos'd 750
His house ; the women all on roofs and towers
Mounted to view, as on a stage, the war ;
For 'twas to them a goodly sight to see,
So high their walls, so stout their men ; they look'd
With pleasure and with pride on this array,
And on the revelry that would succeed
This short alarm, the banquet and the dance ;
And every woman's heart glow'd towards her knight,
As thus she saw him harnessed all for war,
Ready to die, or at her feet to urge 760
His suit, nor meet denial of his mind.
But Eccelino now on Monza march'd ;
Here was he foil'd again, for all were clad
In armour ! as in these fierce bloody times,
Men had all warriors grown, and women all
More gentle, kind, and tender had become,
Because they needed men's protection more
Against wild anarchy, and the dread host

Of Eccelino. Soon a fierce assault
He made on Trezzo's castle, but was driv'n 770
By its defenders brave from 'neath its walls.
And now he felt man's warlike nerves were strain'd ;
No longer could he hope to sweep along,
Nor like an Alpine torrent bear all down,
And overwhelm the plains. His fury now
In part he vents against the country round,
And sates his thirsty blood-hounds with the sack
Of every open burgh, which soon are wreath'd
In flames ; then, tortur'd to the soul, he goes
To Vilmercato, there to rest his troops. 780
Back to Bassano he his bloody way
Now cuts (for he surrounded was by foes
On every side), the Adda to repass ;
But the defences that he late had made
To guard Cassano's bridge, Azzo had forc'd.
On all sides closing on him were his foes,
Like hunters who surround a wood in which
Bristles the boar, who waits to make a rush,
And gore th' unwary hunter with his tusks.
The evening sun declining, shot his rays 790
Upon the soldiers, marching from the west,
And still he glitter'd on their arms, as they
Stood on the Adda's shore. Some arrows flew

Over its flood ; but soon on either side
The guards were fix'd, and the dark night soon stopp'd
Their gaze. They listen'd to each murmur that
Arose ; the weary camp was stretch'd in sleep,
Balmy and deep, from heavy march along
The sultry Milanese, thick set with trees.
A country of chicane, for sudden war, 800
Surprize, and harassing to troops. Meanwhile
Romano's gorgeous tent was pitch'd ; his knights
Attend his call ; and when the high repast
Was done, the proud chief thus address'd the band
Of war-bronz'd cavaliers : " Companions we
Have been through many a hard campaign ; we know
All the vicissitudes of war, yet ne'er
Had we more need of all our skill than now.
Behind us the whole Milanese doth arm ;
Before us runs the Adda guarded by 810
The League, assisted by two traitors vile,
Men lost to honour ; false Dovera, and
Vile Pallavincini ; their forces swell
The Guelphic ranks. The river we must pass
To-morrow morn, nor give them time to meet.
Warriors a tough day 'twill prove ; but we must
Break through their post with sword and lance in hand,
If victory favour us, extirpate all

Their men. My orders are no quarter shall
Be giv'n ; we cannot now encumber'd be 820
By pris'ners or by spoil, for then the whole
Of Lombardy must be our spoil. Our ranks
Will soon be fill'd by hidden Ghibellin troops ;
We must be desperate, bold, and bloody, now,
For I'm resolv'd to conquer or to die !"
He spoke. In silence all his knights withdrew,
For every bosom swell'd with warlike pride.

Up rose the warriors all at break of day,
And all in armour dight had never shone
More brilliant ; for in every bosom glow'd 830
Romano's spirit, and was multiplied
Each man in three. They all now vow'd to crown
Their brows with deathless laurel : nor was shewn
By Macedonia's youth higher emprise,
When in the tide of Granicus he plung'd,
Than Eccelino shew'd, when he plung'd in
The Adda, and with youthful ardour thus
Ended his great career, with feat of arms
As splendid as the world had seen. Oh, Muse,
Invoke the Adda ! Oft her silver wave 840
Was tinged with gore ; oft have proud conquerors drank
That wave ; for late her banks have heard
The cannon roar, and seen the fiery stream

That play'd in vain on Gallic ranks, but ne'er
Have higher feats e'er fill'd the trump of fame,
Than when Romano plung'd his steed superb
Into the flood, on that great fatal day
Which in the story of the world has form'd
An æra. Then his shield, like blazing sun,
Shone far; his crest stream'd like a pennon gay; 850
His arms resplendent mark'd his station high,
More bright they shone, than all that stemm'd the stream,
Now fill'd with his best chivalry. As when
A burning flame from the blue lightning lit
Scathes the long grass, and many a rood around
Devours the crackling brakes: so with their lance
And flashing sword these brilliant squadrons quick
Destroy'd the troops upon the adverse banks.
The ground is clear'd for many a rood, and on
The plain the squadrons wide stand forth; and soon 860
The legions follow them; on rafts and barks
Crowding they rush, they form, and forwards move.
The river's past. The armies now in view
Each of the other stand; like sleety storm
Of hail, the arrows drift, from shields and helms
Rebound; tumultuous uproar reigns among
The leaguers; but calm, fix'd resolve denotes
The host that thus have brav'd the Adda's flood.

Soon now full many a warrior bold must bite
The bloody dust, and stretch his limbs in death, 870
And many a lady's pallid cheek shall be
With gentle tears bedew'd ; and many a house
Shall want a lord and heir, and cypress' wreaths
With laurel wove together blend ; and long
Shall peasants tell the tale where chieftains fell !

All now have pass'd the flood. In order form'd
The warrior army proudly stood ; their looks
Alone the leaguers' strike with awe. In vain
Brave Leoneso rushes to the fray
With loosen'd reins ; his lance in splinters flew ; 880
He draws his sword ; like reaper he mows down
To right and left. The youth now shines the pride
And glory of the field ; his swift white steed
Tracking a bloody path ; when from the arm
Of Saracen a whizzing javelin flew,
In his brave courser's breast deep sunk the dart :
With crash he fell, and roll'd his rider midst
The slain. Rinaldo of Ravenna now
Came on to save the valiant boy ; he met
Cesana on the way (who to his chief 890
Had ceded half his lands) : " Hold, hold," loud cried
The count : " Rinaldo, thou shalt die !" He spoke,
And lifting up his battle axe, he cleft

His helm, and on the ground the warrior sank.
Thus fell Rinaldo, and his spirit fled ;
With streaming mane and nostril snorting wide,
His haughty steed flew o'er the plain and gave
Quick tidings of his rider's fall. Against
Cesana now rush'd stout Octavian
(In pleasant Lucca was he born) ; they fought 900
Like two fierce bulls ; loud rung the battle axe
'Gainst battle axe ; their armour batter'd was
With blows, and they apart were driven. As now
Advanc'd Mainardo, Eccelino's friend,
Count of the Tyrol, leading to the fight
The choicest German horse ; onwards he rode ;
And Leoneso quick another steed
Mounted and fled ; Mainardo clears the ground.
But now Dovera, with the Parma horse,
Wheels round ; a cruel fight is made, and loud 910
The blows resound, and knights are roll'd to earth.
The Egna, Eccelino's sister's son,
He of Verona Podesta ; bold, rough,
A soldier tried for heart and hand, loud calls,
Insulting all ; his blows laid many low,
Now on Albitzi turn'd he, and his sword
Drove through the Tuscan's loins ; the blood rush'd out,
And splash'd his horse and arms. The Egna fierce

Rages like bull goaded by matador,
And all within his reach he gores ; his sword, 920
Wielded with force, through helm and hauberk drives.
Hot Scanerola him now meets, and comes
At him with might and speed ; his spurs are dug
Deep in his horse's sides ; with force not less
Than galley's bowsprit driving on a rock,
Against the Egna's batter'd breastplate strikes
The lance, and heaves him o'er his horse's croup :
His armour ringing, on the ground he rolls
And dies. Now onward march the Gothic men,
With billhooks arm'd, that from Romagna came ; 930
Against Helvetia's sons they press, who sell
Their arms and blood ; but stout and patient are
In war : a dismal din they make, loud as
The ring of axe laid to the mountain pine.
With joy Romano saw the battle spread ;
His master's eye saw that sufficient space
Was gain'd. And now he order'd to advance
His archers all : quickly the iron shower
Darkens the sunny sky. More ground he gains ;
His squadrons, quick reform'd, his genius shines 940
Transcendent. Wheresoe'er he turns his face,
'Tis like the glorious sun that chases fogs
And mists ; where'er he turns his horse's head,

The clouds of leaguers are dispers'd and fly.
Now many a furious charge on either side
Is made, and shout for shout defiance hurls.
Along the line. Azzo comes brilliant forth,
As erst in Parma's field ; and near him rode
The brave Pallavincini, vers'd in war.

Still Eccelino gains more ground, despite 950

Of all the leaguers do. 'Tis noon ; a shower
Hath fall'n to cool their rage ; Romano sees
With joy that he can turn the leaguers' flank.

He orders then the Brescian troops to move ;

But their whole body passes o'er, to swell

The leaguer's ranks. Fury now reign'd in each

Brave breast ; compact and close they march, in hope

Through th' adverse front to cut their way, and gain

Their former lands. On every side now press

Romano's foes ; Azzo full speed comes down, 960

And drives against th' embattled ranks, where wave

Succeeds to wave, as in a storm that spends

Its angry fury 'gainst the solid rock.

'Twas glorious then Romano to behold

Like a bold lion turning on all sides,

Making his foes crowd back. Now furious rush'd

Each knight and soldier of his host, resolv'd

To sell their lives for glory and achieve

A deathless name ; expert in arms they seem'd
Like centaurs, as they wheel'd to right and left, 970
And rode down whole battalions in their course.
They fought 'mid heaps of slain ; the blood-soak'd ground
Trembled beneath their feet. One rush their chief
Now makes and scatters round his foes ; behold
Him then, remounted on a fiery steed,
With blood-stain'd brand in hand, scouring the field,
Cover'd with wrecks of arms, where thousands lie
Around. His fierce knights plunge on every side,
And helms and men cleave to the saddle-tree.
Their steeds, like galleys rising on the wave, 980
Bear all resistance down ; no numbers could
Their shock withstand, for lion-like they fought.

Now hard the stormy blast of battle drove,
Like pelting sleet and hail ; and louder roar'd
The furious yell than howling winter winds ;
For death or victory swell'd each gallant heart,
And proud disdain nerv'd each rais'd arm with might ;
And sounding hoofs, and ringing arms, and shafts
Whizzing in air, were music to this wild
And frantic revelry of death. Oh, day 990
Of slaughter, hideous slaughter, far and wide !
How many a crested casque was cleft in twain,
And many a spear, infixed in bodies hung,

And many a steed embowel'd, trail'd along
His entrails o'er the field; and yells and shouts
Were intermingled; loud rebellow'd wide
The thunder of the strife. Many an eye
Of gallant knight was dimm'd, and swam, and then
Was seal'd in night; and horse and rider both,
Exulting, fierce, and proud, plung'd, raging through
The hosts; and arrows darken all the sky. 1001
In phalanx firm, the stout Romagnols now
Maintain their ranks, and all together cling;
And to and fro they reel, 'neath each fierce shock,
Together bound, each man an iron link
In the strong chain; cohort on cohort quick
Rallies; advances still the lengthen'd line,
Moving unbroken, terrible, and slow.
Behold what contrast there 'twixt men erect
That proudly move, and the cold stiff'ning corse, 1010
Strew'd round, and quivering limbs, and swimming eyes,
That enter slow the threshold dread of death;
Whilst every dart that flew, might soon lay low
A soldier proud and bold, who spurn'd the ground.
Yet such is awful fate, sudden and dark!
Now quick Romano to a village rode
To rally all his scatter'd troops; he sees
A peasant near, and thus exclaims: "How is

This village call'd ? " " Cassano !" was the prompt
Reply. Swift as a deadly dart that cuts 1020
The air, these words pierced through the soul of him
Who flights of darts had brav'd ; whose mighty heart
Had in a hundred battles swell'd ; his face
Fell prone upon his courser's neck. The words
Of Fate more deadly are than all the darts
Of Death ; more terrible the sorceress seem'd
Than Havoc sweeping in her gory car,
Pouring forth blood like Autumn's rain. His head
He hung in silence, as the hand of Fate
He felt. At this dread moment from a bow 1030
A whistling arrow flew ; it fix'd his leg
Unto his horse's side, when o'er he fell :
His armour rung like crash of oak that falls.
A peasant first ran up ; with reaping hook
He struck him on the head, for the chief once
Had caus'd his brother to be maim'd ; but soon
Giovanni da Soncino, rushing through
The field, beheld with high disdain a hind striving
To slay a knight : he cleft the peasant's skull
In twain ; honor and arms would ne'er allow 1040
To see a valiant knight so maim'd. And now
By him Romano was as prisoner claim'd ;
The honor was his own. Soon was he join'd

By Azzo and Dovera, with more chiefs ;
They all dismount, and with obeisance due
Salute the warrior ; he a silence proud
Maintains, and then unto Dovera's tent
Is borne. His wounds are dress'd, but still he keeps
The same proud silence, the same sullen mien.

The battle now is o'er ; the tidings flew 1050
From rank to rank of either host ; their swords
All fall from their tir'd arms, and in that hour
The spirit of the war is quench'd ; the day
Is won for Italy. Freedom uncag'd
Loud flaps her wings, rejoicing soars aloft.
On her dread altar what a hecatomb,
Libations of Italian blood is shed.

Yet Fame blows now her loudest blast, to drown
The sobs and cries of a sad widow'd land,
And laurel wreaths now hide the cypress bough. 1060
The sternest heart look'd o'er that field and sigh'd,
And shudder'd o'er the banquet death had gain'd.
Oh, Italy, thy thirsty soil drank deep
Thy noblest blood, in these fierce civil broils !

On Eccelino soon all eyes were fix'd ;
All ran to view the chief, whose great renown
The world had fill'd ; their fury was disarm'd,
And all approach'd the chief with silent awe.

When gloomy night o'er Heaven's high arch was spread,
Romano was upon a litter laid. 1070
Around rode many knights ; with torch in hand,
They pass in silence slow, o'er that dread plain ;
On many a stiffen'd corse their torches gleam,
On wrecks of arms, and crested helms, that lay
Upon the frightful field ; unburied all,
The warriors lay, silent, and stiff, and cold.
The Spirit of the war is fled ! and like
A midnight spectre hath Romano pass'd !
All, all his power is gone, save his dread name
That men dare scarcely breathe, and all his crimes 1080
Were now forgot in admiration high
Of his vast prowess. Chivalry will e'er
Sigh over fallen greatness, for it is
Sacred, th' impulse from other worlds thus comes
Upon mankind, a mystery deep and dark !
As o'er the death-strew'd plain, thus slowly mov'd
Romano, deep reflection filled each breast.
Unto Soncino's castle he was borne,
Near to Cremona ; there with regal pomp
He was receiv'd, and due respect, as to 1090
The most illustrious prince of Italy.
A dream he had, that he was in his tomb ;
Th' eleventh morning saw him yield, at length,

To his last destiny. His obsequies
Most regal were ; but as he died without
The Church's pale, his sepulchre was plac'd
In ground unconsecrate ; nor was there writ
Aught of his great deeds ; his dread name alone
Doth to the world his dreadful story tell ! 1099

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[The body of the document contains several paragraphs of text, which are mostly illegible due to the low quality of the scan. The text appears to be a formal letter or report, with some lines of text visible in the first few paragraphs.]



